Joe Benitez's
Lady Mechanika
Vol. 5
Chen · Benitez · Montiel · Sotelo · Heisler
La Belle Dame sans Merci

THE COMPLETE
VOLUME FIVE
FIFTH VOLUME

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La Belle Dame Sans Merci

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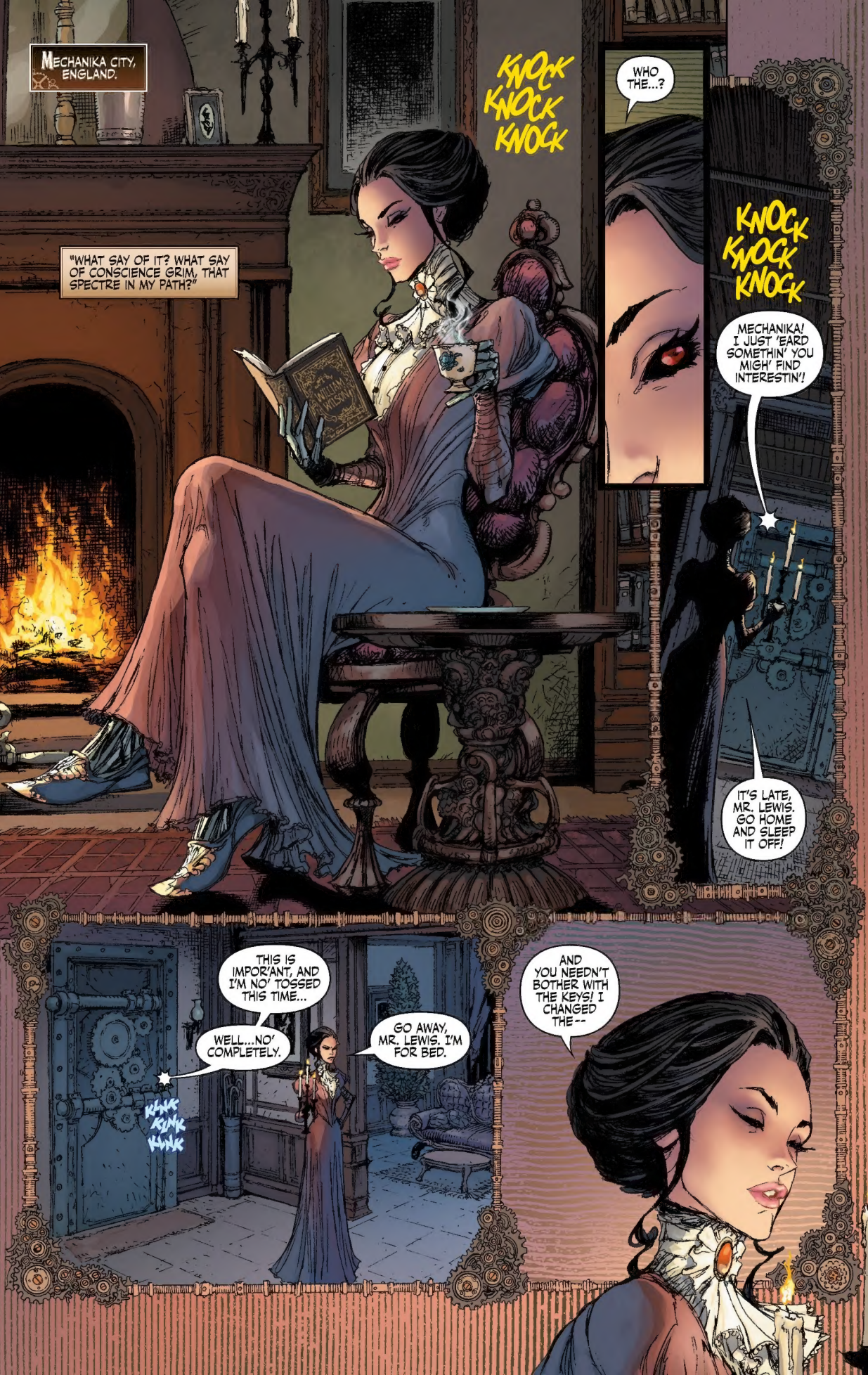
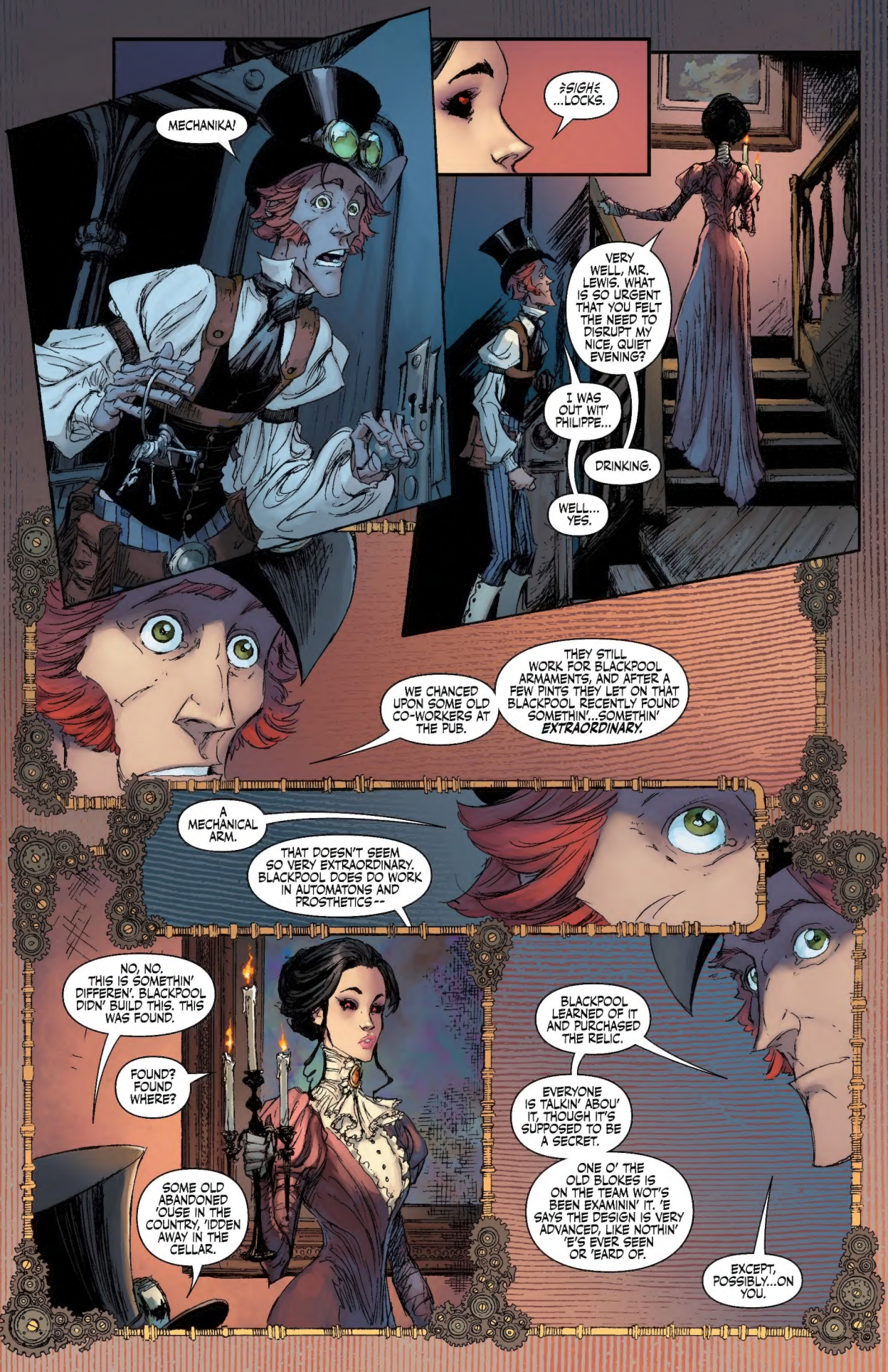
Joe Benitez's Lady Mechanika in

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

Lady Mechanika created by Joe Benitez

Prelude: Two


MECHANIKA CITY, ENGLAND.
"WHAT SAY OF IT? WHAT SAY OF CONSCIENCE GRIM, THAT SPECTRE IN MY PATH?"
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
WHO THE...?
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
MECHANIKA! I JUST 'EARD SOMETHIN' YOU MIGH' FIND INTERESTIN'!
IT'S LATE, MR. LEWIS. GO HOME AND SLEEP IT OFF!
GO AWAY, MR. LEWIS. I'M FOR BED.
WELL...NO' COMPLETELY.
THIS IS IMPOR'ANT, AND I'M NO' TOSSED THIS TIME...
KLNK KLNK KLNK
AND YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER WITH THE KEYS! I CHANGED THE--


MECHANIKA!
≥SIGH≤ ...LOCKS.
VERY WELL, MR. LEWIS. WHAT IS SO URGENT THAT YOU FELT THE NEED TO DISRUPT MY NICE, QUIET EVENING?
I WAS OUT WIT' PHILIPPE...
DRINKING.
WELL... YES.
WE CHANCED UPON SOME OLD CO-WORKERS AT THE PUB.
THEY STILL WORK FOR BLACKPOOL ARMAMENTS, AND AFTER A FEW PINTS THEY LET ON THAT BLACKPOOL RECENTLY FOUND SOMETHIN'...SOMETHIN' EXTRAORDINARY.
A MECHANICAL ARM.
THAT DOESN'T SEEM SO VERY EXTRAORDINARY. BLACKPOOL DOES DO WORK IN AUTOMATONS AND PROSTHETICS--
NO, NO. THIS IS SOMETHIN' DIFFEREN'. BLACKPOOL DIDN' BUILD THIS. THIS WAS FOUND.
FOUND? FOUND WHERE?
SOME OLD ABANDONED 'OUSE IN THE COUNTRY, 'IDDEN AWAY IN THE CELLAR.
BLACKPOOL LEARNED OF IT AND PURCHASED THE RELIC.
EVERYONE IS TALKIN' ABOU' IT, THOUGH IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET.
ONE O' THE OLD BLOKES IS ON THE TEAM WOT'S BEEN EXAMININ' IT. 'E SAYS THE DESIGN IS VERY ADVANCED, LIKE NOTHIN' 'E'S EVER SEEN OR 'EARD OF.
EXCEPT, POSSIBLY...ON YOU.

WHERE IS THIS ITEM NOW?
BLACKPOOL'S RESEARCH FACILITY, SOUTH OF THE CITY. THEY 'AVE IT LOCKED AWAY IN THE LABORATORY FOR BIOLOGICAL AND MECHANICAL RESEARCH.
THE SOUTH RESEARCH FACILITY, ISN'T THAT THE BUILDING WHERE YOU WERE ONCE EMPLOYED? COULD YOU SMUGGLE ME INSIDE?
I...I MIGH' KNOW A WAY IN. I 'AVEN'T BEEN THERE SINCE... SINCE.
OH, I'M SORRY, I...
DO YOU... DO YOU NEED ME TO GO WIT' YOU?
THANK YOU FOR OFFERING, MR. LEWIS, BUT I'D PREFER TO WORK THIS ONE ALONE IF YOU DON'T MIND.
HOW DO YOU PROPOSE I GET IN?
THE FACILITY IS GUARDED DAY AND NIGH'. BUT THERE'S ONE ENTRY THAT ISN'T PATROLLED...

"...THE ROOF.

"THE BUILDIN' HAS A FANCY ATRIUM WOT'S OPEN TO EVERY LEVEL, WIT' A GLASS SKYLIGH' ON THE ROOF.

"GUARDS ARE STATIONED ON THE GROUND FLOOR, BUT YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET IN UNDETEC'ED, AS LONG AS NO ONE LOOKS UP.

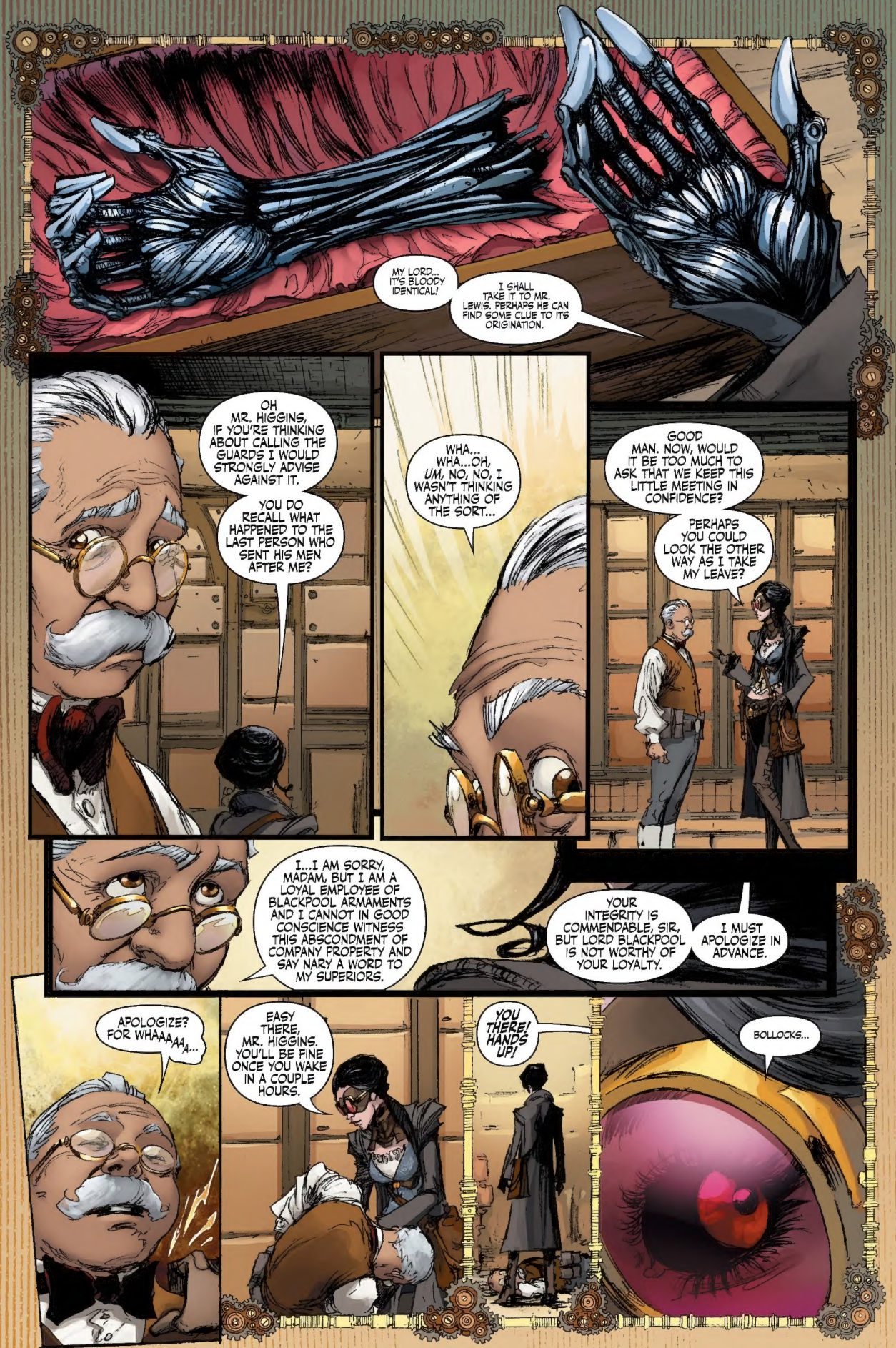
"AND YOU CAN TRY OUT MY NEWEST INVENTION, THE LEWIS MINIATURE MELTER!

"IT CAN MELT A HOLE IN THE SKYLIGH' LARGE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO PASS THROUGH.

"YOU'LL FIND THE LABORATORY ON THE SECOND LEVEL.

"OH, AND WATCH OUT FOR STRAY ENGINEERS. WE'RE A STRANGE LOT AND OFTEN WORK LATE INTO THE WEE HOURS OF THE NIGH'.

NO, NO, THAT ISN'T RIGHT. PERHAPS... HMMM...
WAIT A MINUTE... I KNOW THAT FELLOW...*
WHAT WAS HIS NAME? MISTER... MISTER...
*SEE THE DEMON OF SATAN'S ALLEY.
MR. HIGGINS?
YES, WHAT IS IT? I'M RATHER BUSY AT THE MOMENT.
SO SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, SIR, BUT BY CHANCE IS THIS WHERE THAT NEW MECHANICAL ARM IS BEING STORED?
INDEED IT IS. YOU ARE THE FIFTH PERSON TODAY ASKING FOR IT, BUT THE VAULT IS LOCKED UP FOR THE NIGHT. IF YOU WISH TO VIEW IT, YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL MORNING.
I'M AFRAID IT CANNOT WAIT. WOULD YOU BE A DEAR AND OPEN THE VAULT FOR ME?
AS I SAID, YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT--
CLK
I INSIST.
LA...LA...LADY MECHANIKA!
MR. HIGGINS, IT'S BEEN A WHILE. I'M DISAPPOINTED YOU DIDN'T FOLLOW DR. LITTLETON'S EXAMPLE AND MOVE ON TO MORE HONEST EMPLOYMENT.
LI... LITTLETON? BUT HE--
I'M AFRAID I'M IN A BIT OF A RUSH, SO IF YOU PLEASE...THE VAULT...?
NOW LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THIS ARM THAT'S BEEN CAUSING SO MUCH EXCITEMENT.
IT...IT...


MY LORD... IT'S BLOODY IDENTICAL!
I SHALL TAKE IT TO MR. LEWIS. PERHAPS HE CAN FIND SOME CLUE TO ITS ORIGINATION.
OH MR. HIGGINS, IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT CALLING THE GUARDS I WOULD STRONGLY ADVISE AGAINST IT.
YOU DO RECALL WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAST PERSON WHO SENT HIS MEN AFTER ME?
WHA... WHA...OH, UM, NO, NO, I WASN'T THINKING ANYTHING OF THE SORT...
GOOD MAN. NOW, WOULD IT BE TOO MUCH TO ASK THAT WE KEEP THIS LITTLE MEETING IN CONFIDENCE?
PERHAPS YOU COULD LOOK THE OTHER WAY AS I TAKE MY LEAVE?
I...I AM SORRY, MADAM, BUT I AM A LOYAL EMPLOYEE OF BLACKPOOL ARMAMENTS AND I CANNOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE WITNESS THIS ABSCONDMENT OF COMPANY PROPERTY AND SAY NARY A WORD TO MY SUPERIORS.
YOUR INTEGRITY IS COMMENDABLE, SIR, BUT LORD BLACKPOOL IS NOT WORTHY OF YOUR LOYALTY.
I MUST APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE.
APOLOGIZE? FOR WHAAAAAA...
EASY THERE, MR. HIGGINS. YOU'LL BE FINE ONCE YOU WAKE IN A COUPLE HOURS.
YOU THERE! HANDS UP!
BOLLOCKS...

THIS AREA IS RESTRICTED TO AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY! WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE HERE?
AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MR. HIGGINS?
I...I'M HIS NIECE. HE WAS GIVING ME A TOUR OF HIS WORKPLACE BUT HE SUDDENLY FELT FAINT...
IF YOU'RE HIS NIECE, WHY THEN DID HE TRIGGER THE SILENT ALARM?
OH, HE DID?
THAT LITTLE BUGGER.
WATCH OUT, COMMANDER! SHE'S ARMED!
GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES, KEEP YOUR HANDS UP!
YES, SIR! I WAS ONLY--
YOU CAN EXPLAIN IT TO HIS LORDSHIP. NOW GET DOWN!
RESTRAIN HER AND TAKE HER WEA--
BLAM
CRUNCH
WHAT THE--

WHACK

THWACK

THONK

CRACK

JUST YOU AND ME LEFT!

STOMP

THWACK

THUMK

SLASH

HOW DID YOU...
IT SEEMS LORD BLACKPOOL HAS FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN SOMEHOW ENHANCING HIS SOLDIERS.
THUD
I WOULD NAE KNOW. I DINNAE WORK FOR BLACKPOOL!
THEN WHY...ARE YOU HERE?
SCRNG!
BLAM
SAME REASON YAE ARE...
I NEED THE ITEM YAE STOLE!
DO YAE REALLY THINK... YOU...CAN BEST ME?
I CAN'T LET YOU TAKE THAT!
I WAS NAE ASKING!
>GASP!<

WHOOSH
OOOMPH!
THUD
YER JUST A SECOND RATE... VERSION...
?!
...OF ME!
STAY OUT O' MY WAY, "MECHANIKA."
MY LIFE'S BEEN CONSIDERABLY BET'ER SINCE YE'VE BEEN GONE.

SINCE I'VE BEEN GONE? GONE FROM WHERE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?
WAIT!!!
WHO ARE YOU?!
I WOULD NAE MIND MAKIN' YER ABSENCE A BIT MORE...PERMANENT, BUT I IMAGINE DEAR PAPA WOULD NAE APPROVE.
I'LL GIVE YAE TEN SECONDS.
BET'ER MOVE ALONG.
WAIT... NO! STOP!
beep beep
beep beep
OH, NO... HIGGINS...
SWOOSH
SWOOSH
beep beep
SWOOSH
SWOOSH

beep beep
SLAM
BWOOOOM!
SHE CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR! BUT WHICH WAY?
THE ROOF!
WHICH WAY!
I CAN VIEW THE ENTIRE ENVIRONS FROM UP HERE!

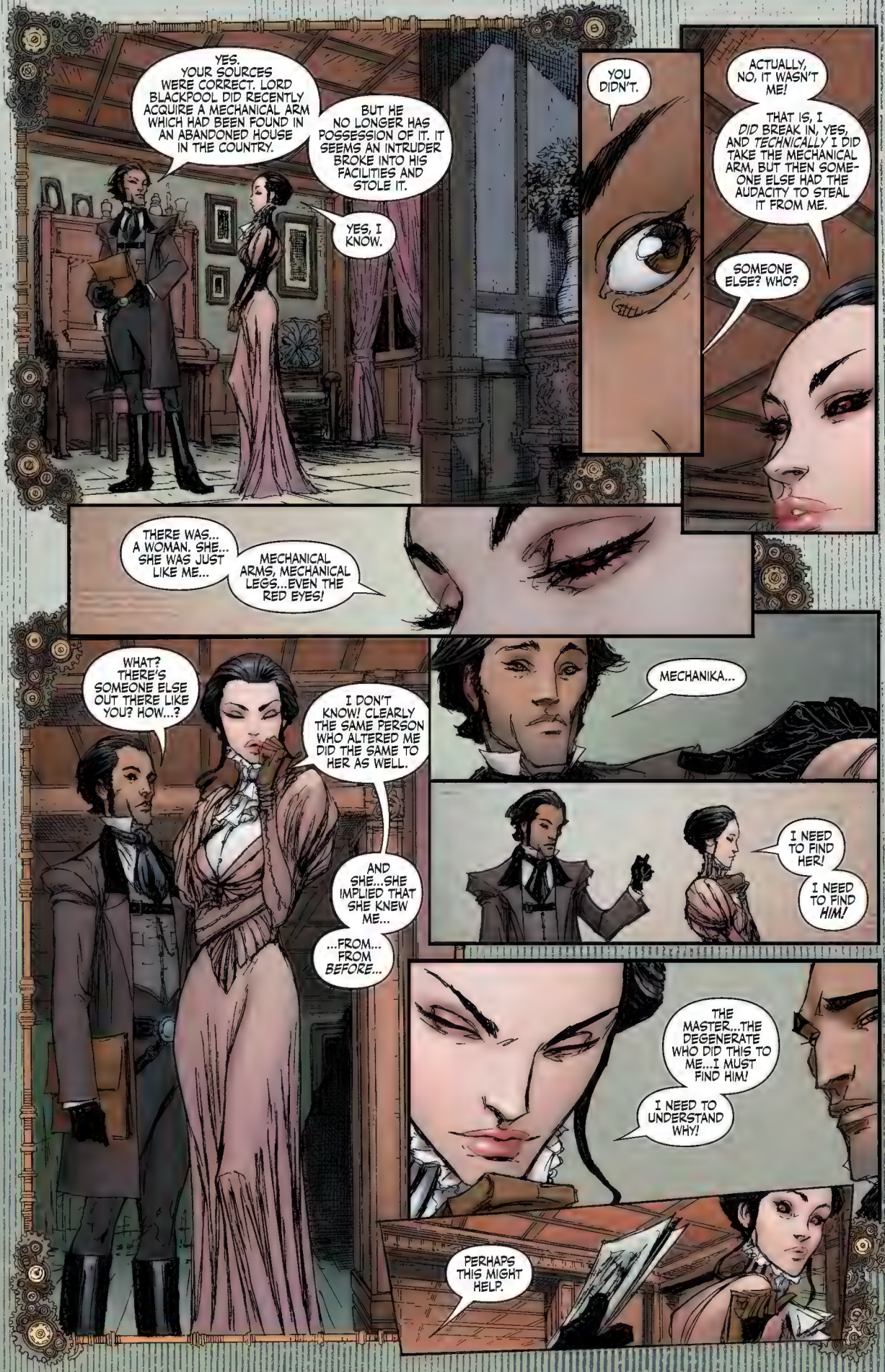
BLAST IT ALL, NOTHING! NO SIGN OF HER ANYWHERE!
JUST AS FAST AS ME. JUST AS STRONG.
THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...
WE WERE ALTERED BY THE SAME PERSON.
YOU MAY HAVE WON THE PRIZE THIS TIME, BUT I HAVE THE SCENT NOW.
AND I'M COMING FOR YOU...
MASTER...

La Belle Dame sans Merci

Chapter One

"ALL ART IS IMMORTAL."
—Oscar Wilde
YES!
MAGNIFICO!
LORENZO, MY DEAREST...
NO TIME...
KOFF KOFF KOFF KOFF KOFF
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH TIME!
I MUST FINISH...
...MUST FINISH...MY WORK...
...BEFORE...
...BEFORE... AAAHHHH...

MECHANIKA CITY
GOOD EVENING, LADY MECHANIKA! I APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING SO LATE. POLICE HOURS, I'M AFRAID.
OF COURSE, INSPECTOR. PLEASE, DO COME IN. MAY I OFFER YOU SOME TEA?
INSPECTOR SINGH!
OH NO, THANK YOU. I WOULDN'T WANT TO PUT YOU OUT. I ONLY STOPPED BY TO DELIVER THE INFORMATION YOU REQUESTED.
YOU FOUND IT?


YES. YOUR SOURCES WERE CORRECT. LORD BLACKPOOL DID RECENTLY ACQUIRE A MECHANICAL ARM WHICH HAD BEEN FOUND IN AN ABANDONED HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY.
BUT HE NO LONGER HAS POSSESSION OF IT. IT SEEMS AN INTRUDER BROKE INTO HIS FACILITIES AND STOLE IT.
YES, I KNOW.
YOU DIDN'T.
ACTUALLY, NO, IT WASN'T ME!
THAT IS, I *DID* BREAK IN, YES, AND *TECHNICALLY* I DID TAKE THE MECHANICAL ARM, BUT THEN SOMEONE ELSE HAD THE AUDACITY TO STEAL IT FROM ME.
SOMEONE ELSE? WHO?
THERE WAS... A WOMAN. SHE... SHE WAS JUST LIKE ME...
MECHANICAL ARMS, MECHANICAL LEGS...EVEN THE RED EYES!
WHAT? THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE OUT THERE LIKE YOU? HOW...?
I DON'T KNOW! CLEARLY THE SAME PERSON WHO ALTERED ME DID THE SAME TO HER AS WELL.
AND SHE...SHE IMPLIED THAT SHE KNEW ME...
...FROM... FROM *BEFORE*...
MECHANIKA...
I NEED TO FIND HER!
I NEED TO FIND *HIM!*
THE MASTER...THE DEGENERATE WHO DID THIS TO ME...I MUST FIND HIM!
I NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHY!
PERHAPS THIS MIGHT HELP.

THIS IS WHERE THE ARM WAS FOUND?
IT IS. BLYTHE HOUSE, IT WAS CALLED, BUT IT HASN'T BEEN INHABITED FOR SEVERAL YEARS. AT LEAST NOT BY ITS PROPER OWNERS.
DOES IT LOOK FAMILIAR?
THE ADDRESS AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE NEW OWNER AND HIS AGENT ARE ON THE BACK OF THE PHOTOGRAPH.
THANK YOU, INSPECTOR.
NO. NOT IN THE SLIGHTEST.
PERHAPS IF I GO SEE IT IN PERSON...
I APPRECIATE THE EXTRA WORK YOU'VE DONE TRACKING THIS DOWN FOR ME.
IT'S NO TROUBLE. I COULD ACCOMPANY YOU, IF YOU'D LIKE, WHEN YOU GO TO TAKE A LOOK AT IT.

BLACKPOOL MAY BE PLOTTING SOME SORT OF RETRIBUTION FOR YOUR UNLAWFUL BREAKING AND ENTERING.
IT'S PROBABLY BEST IF I WASN'T ACCOMPANIED BY AN OFFICER OF THE LAW.
YOU'RE NOT BREAKING IN AGAIN.
WOULD IT EASE YOUR CONSCIENCE IF I ASKED FOR PERMISSION FIRST?
YES, ACTUALLY, IT WOULD.
YOU ARE COMMENDABLY SCRUPULOUS, INSPECTOR. I FEAR I SHALL BE A BAD INFLUENCE.
VERY WELL, I'LL SET UP AN APPOINTMENT TO VIEW THE PROPERTY. SATISFIED?
YES. BUT DON'T GO ALONE. IF YOU WON'T TAKE ME ALONG, AT LEAST BRING MR. LEWIS.
YOU REALLY NEEDN'T CONCERN YOURSELF OVER LORD BLACKPOOL. I CAN MANAGE THE LIKES OF HIM!
OH, I ALMOST FORGOT!
I DON'T DOUBT IT. IT'S LORD BLACKPOOL'S REMAINING LIMBS I'M WORRIED ABOUT!
I BROUGHT THIS FOR YOU. A BOOK OF POETRY BY KEATS.
IT WAS IN A BOX OF OLD EVIDENCE HEADED FOR THE RUBBISH HEAP. I THOUGHT IT DESERVED A BETTER END THAN THAT, PERHAPS AS AN ADDITION TO YOUR LIBRARY?
WHY, THANK YOU, INSPECTOR. I'LL ADD IT TO MY COLLECTION.
LET ME KNOW IF YOU LIKE IT. I HEAR KEATS WAS --
LADY MECHANIKA!
OH BLOODY HELL! AGAIN?
'FRAID SO, MUM. OLD MAN MACGREGOR SENT ME TO FETCH YER.
TELL HIM I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
TROUBLE?
IT'S NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE.

MacGREGOR'S PUB. A FEW MINUTES LATER...
HE'S GETTIN' WORSE, LASS.
USED TO BE HE'D JUST KEEP TO HIS SELF. MOST NIGHTS WE DINNAE EVEN CALL FOR YE, JUST LET 'IM SLEEP IT OFF IN THE CORNER.
BUT LATELY HE'S BEEN GETTIN' VIOLENT, THROWIN' THINGS, YELLIN' AT THE OTHER PATRONS.
TONIGHT HE PICKED A FIGHT WITH A COUPLE OUTTA TOWNERS.
THERE HE IS.
THANK YOU, MR. MacGREGOR. I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM.
TELL 'IM HE'S NAE WELCOME HERE ANYMORE, NAE UNTIL HE CLEANS HIS SELF UP.
COME ON, MR. LEWIS. LET'S GET YOU HOME.
HUH... WHA...AHM FINE...AHM FINE...

YOU'VE REALLY MADE A MESS OF YOURSELF THIS TIME, MR. LEWIS.
MACGREGOR'S HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH OF YOU.
BLOO'Y M'GRER...
BUGGA HIM! BUGGA ALL OF 'EM...
PLEN'Y OTHE' 'STABISH... 'STABISHMEN... OOMPH!
LEWIS!
SOD OFF!
I DON' NEE...
...DON' NEED...
...ANY... 'ELP...

MR. LEWIS... ARCHIBALD.
YOU NEED TO LET GO OF THE PAST. NONE OF IT WAS YOUR FAULT.*
*SEE THE CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN.
I KNOW YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME, BUT YOU CAN'T KEEP ON LIVING THIS WAY.
THE DRINK IS GOING TO KILL YOU.
MEBBE...
MEBBE THA' WOULD BE BESSSS...
...BEST FOR...
...EV'ONE...

THE MECHANIKA CITY MUSEUM OF ART, A FEW DAYS LATER...
THANKS AGAIN FOR BRINGING ME TO THE EXHIBIT, LADY MECHANIKA! UNCLE ARCHIE PROMISED HE WOULD TAKE ME, BUT...I GUESS HE FORGOT.
DON'T TAKE IT TOO PERSONALLY, FRED. YOUR UNCLE'S BEEN FEELING A BIT OUT OF SORTS LATELY. I'LL TRY TO PAY HIM A VISIT THIS AFTERNOON.
FOR NOW I GET TO ENJOY THIS MARVELOUS ART SHOW! THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME! THE ARTIST WAS VERY TALENTED.
LORENZO DI MATTEO. HE MIGHT HAVE RIVALED MICHELANGELO HIMSELF IF HE HAD LIVED PAST 27.
HE CREATED ALL THIS BY AGE 27? IMPRESSIVE.
YES, AND MOST OF IT DURING HIS LAST THREE YEARS. SOME PEOPLE CALLED IT DIVINE INSPIRATION.
OH! COME LOOK OVER HERE! THIS ONE'S MY FAVORITE!
IT'S CALLED LA FATA DELLA LUNA.
I JUST LOVE FAIRIES!
OOOH... PRETTY...
SHE'S NOT REAL, YOU KNOW.

PARDON?
I SAID, SHE'S NOT REAL.
UH...YES, I KNOW.
IT'S A STATUE.
I WASN'T SPEAKING OF THE FAIRY.
I WAS SPEAKING OF THAT WOMAN WITH WHOM YOU WERE ASSOCIATING. SHE'S A DEVIOUS IMPOSTER.
WHY, IF IT ISN'T MY ARCHNEMESIS, MISS ALEXANDRA LITTLETON THE FIRST.
HER.
AND HOW ARE YOU TODAY, MISS ALLIE?
I WOULD FEEL BETTER, *MADAM*, IF YOU WOULD PLEASE KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. I WOULDN'T WANT ANYONE TO THINK I WAS HELPING YOU WITH YOUR NEFARIOUS SCHEMES.
OH, I DOUBT ANYONE WOULD DARE THINK THAT!
ALLIE...OH! LADY MECHANIKA!
HELLO, DR. LITTLETON. HOW NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
OH YES, YOU TOO, YOU TOO! I DO HOPE ALEXANDRA ISN'T BEING A BOTHER.
OH, NOT AT ALL! WE WERE JUST REAFFIRMING OUR LITTLE RIVALRY! RIGHT, MISS ALLIE?
HRMPH!
THIS IS MR. LEWIS'S NIECE, WINIFRED.
HOW DO YOU DO, MISS WINIFRED. MAY I INTRODUCE MY DAUGHTER, ALEXANDRA.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU. THIS IS...
IT... TALKS?
HEY, MONTY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING!
I WANT TO SEE THE PRETTY STATUE AGAIN...

I'M SO SORRY ABOUT ALLIE...I'VE TRIED TO TELL HER THAT YOU'RE NOT AN IMPOSTER BUT SHE REFUSES TO LISTEN.
I HOPE YOU AREN'T TOO OFFENDED.
I DON'T MIND, DOCTOR. THERE'S NO HARM IN IT. SHE'S A BRIGHT YOUNG LADY WHO ISN'T AFRAID TO SPEAK HER MIND.
AN ADMIRABLE QUALITY, THOUGH I'M NOT SURE IF WINIFRED WILL BE AS TOLERANT OF HER SUPPOSITIONS.
I DIDN'T REALIZE MR. LEWIS HAD A NIECE ABOUT ALLIE'S AGE. IS HE HERE TOO? I'D ENJOY TALKING WITH HIM AGAIN.
NO, I'M AFRAID NOT. HE HASN'T BEEN FEELING TOO WELL OF LATE.
OH? I COULD STOP BY AND CHECK ON HIM IF HE'S ILL?
I THINK HE'S JUST BEEN FEELING A LITTLE DOWN. BUT I'LL BE SURE TO CALL ON YOU IF IT BECOMES MORE SERIOUS. THANK YOU, DOCTOR. YOU'RE VERY KIND TO OFFER.
FATHER!
OF COURSE, OF COURSE. YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CALL ON ME, ANY TIME YOU NEED.

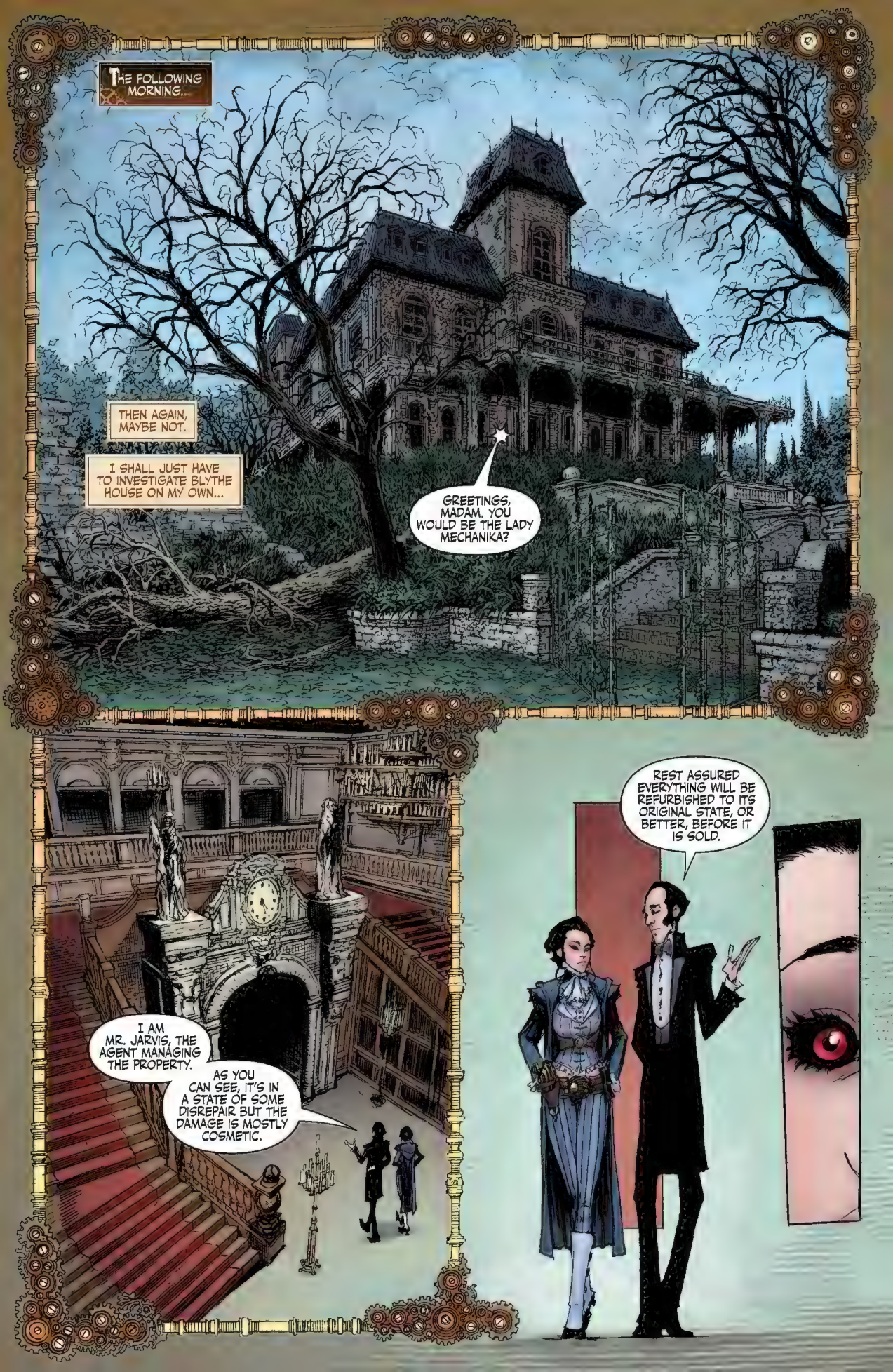
ALLIE? WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I HAVE NEVER BEEN SO INSULTED IN ALL MY LIFE! I'M LEAVING!
ALLIE... OH, UH... PARDON ME...
THAT IS ONE VERY PECULIAR LITTLE GIRL.
WHAT HAPPENED, FRED?
SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT YOU ARE NOT THE "REAL" LADY MECHANIKA.
MONTY ASKED IF SHE WAS DAFT.
SHE TOOK OFFENSE.
OH, DEAR.
DID I DO SOMETHING BAD?
IT'S OKAY, MONTY. I MUST ADMIT I WAS THINKING IT TOO!
WE CAN LEAVE WHENEVER YOU'RE READY, LADY MECHANIKA. YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO GO SEE UNCLE ARCHIE?
YES, I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM IN A FEW DAYS AND I'D LIKE TO MAKE CERTAIN EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT.
PERHAPS A JOB WILL HELP TAKE HIS MIND OFF HIS TROUBLES.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
MR. LEWIS!
MR. LEWIS, YOUR DOOR WAS UNLOCKED!
MR. LEWIS?
SIGH
LEWIS, ARE YOU...
MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE MUMBLE
MR. LEWIS? I WAS HOPING YOU MIGHT HELP ME WITH A JOB TOMORROW.
I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS BUT INSPECTOR--
OH!

ARCHIE, MY DEAREST, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE COMPANY.
WHA...?
MECHANIKA!
I'M SO GLAD YER 'ERE!

I SOLVED THA' PROBLEM I WAS HAVIN' WIT' MY NEW STUN PISTOL!
THE GUN IS TOO SMALL, YOU SEE. AT THIS SIZE SOME OF THE STUN ENERGY WILL ALWAYS BE DISPERSED BACK UPON THE PERSON FIRIN' IT.
SO I DESIGNED THIS, AN ARMGUARD OF ABSORPTION! IT ABSORBS THE EXCESS ENERGY SO THE USER WON'T GET STUNNED! GENIUS, RIGH'?
'ERE, 'ERE, TAKE IT! IT'LL WORK, I PROMISE!
OH, AND TAKE A LOOK AT THIS! IT'S MY NEWEST IDEA!
SPE'TACLES OF SHIFTIN' TEMPORAL PERCEPTION, I'M CALLIN' IT!
MR. LEWIS...
IT'S JUS' IN THE BEGINNIN' STAGES BUT I REALLY THINK I'VE FOUND A WAY TO SEE INTO--
MR. LEWIS! ARE YOU SLOSHED?
WHA'? NO! I FEEL *GREAT!* 'AVEN'T HAD A DROP SINCE MEETIN' --*OH!*
YOU 'AVEN'T MET MY MUSE!
LEANNA! COME AND MEET THE GREAT LADY MECHANIKA!

MECHANIKA, IT IS MY DISTINC' PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MRS. LEANNA SHI... MY FIANCÉE.
YOUR... YOUR WHAT?
WHEN DID YOU... HOW...?
OH, I SEE YOUR CONFUSION! LEANNA IS A WIDOW. 'ER 'USBAND WAS A RENOWNED ARTIST BUT 'E DIED YOUNG.
IT WAS MANY, MANY YEARS AGO.
I AM SO HONORED TO MEET YOU, MAM'SELLE MECHANIKA.
I BEG YOUR PARDON!
I WAS JUST SURPRISED TO HEAR MR. LEWIS IS ENGAGED OF A SUDDEN.
PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MRS. SHI.
OW!
I'M SO SORRY! DID I HURT YOU?
YOUR HANDS...ARE YOU PERCHANCE WEARING SOMEDZING MADE OF DZEE IRON?
I...
MY HANDS ARE MECHANICAL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE MADE OF, EXACTLY.
OF COURSE, I APOLOGIZE. I AM SENSITIVE TO CERTAIN OF DZEE METALS.
EVEN THROUGH GLOVES?
YES, EVEN SO. I AM ACTUALLY FEELING QUITE ILL. ARCHIE, MY DEAREST, COULD YOU PLEASE TAKE ME HOME?
OF COURSE, LOVE. MECHANIKA, WAS THERE SOMETHIN' YOU NEEDED?
I CAME TO ASK IF YOU'D ACCOMPANY ME ON A JOB IN THE MORNING.
OF COURSE, OF COURSE! I'LL MEET YOU AT YOUR FLAT, BRIGH' AND EARLY! SEE YOU THEN!
HUH. STRANGE, BUT AT LEAST HE SEEMS TO BE OUT OF HIS DEPRESSION.
AND NOW MAYBE HE'LL ACTUALLY REMEMBER OUR APPOINTMENT...


THE FOLLOWING MORNING...
THEN AGAIN, MAYBE NOT.
I SHALL JUST HAVE TO INVESTIGATE BLYTHE HOUSE ON MY OWN...
GREETINGS, MADAM. YOU WOULD BE THE LADY MECHANIKA?
I AM MR. JARVIS, THE AGENT MANAGING THE PROPERTY.
AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S IN A STATE OF SOME DISREPAIR BUT THE DAMAGE IS MOSTLY COSMETIC.
REST ASSURED EVERYTHING WILL BE REFURBISHED TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE, OR BETTER, BEFORE IT IS SOLD.

THE CURRENT OWNER INHERITED THE HOUSE UNEXPECTEDLY.
NO ONE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PREVIOUS OWNER. HE WAS DECLARED DECEASED AFTER BEING MISSING FOR SEVERAL YEARS...
UCKY...
MADAM?
UNGH...
MADAM? ARE YOU QUITE ALL RIGHT?
...YES, OF COURSE...MY APOLOGIES...
VERY WELL THEN. IF YOU'D PLEASE FOLLOW ME, I CAN SHOW YOU THE KITCHEN AND SERVANTS' HALLS...
I HEARD A RUMOR THAT THEY FOUND AN UNUSUAL RELIC BURIED HERE. I MUST CONFESS IT IS MY PRIMARY INTEREST IN THE PROPERTY. WAS IT FOUND IN THIS CELLAR?

SLAM
MR. JARVIS?
BOLLOCKS!
POP
POP
POP
POP
SHUNK
ARRGHHH!
SHUNK
BZZZ
BZZZ
UNGH...
SHUNK

WELL, I MUST SAY, THAT WAS RATHER DISAPPOINTING. I WAS EXPECTING MORE OF A FIGHT. I ALMOST FEEL BAD CHARGING OUR FULL FEE. ALMOST.
JOB WELL DONE, REAPERS. SECURE THE PRISONER AND GET HER INTO THE HEARSE.
LET'S GO COLLECT OUR BOUNTY.
YES, MISTRESS GRIMM!

Chapter Two

WONDER WHY THE CLIENT WANTED US TO USE ONLY STUNNERS.
NOT OFTEN THAT SOMEONE PAYS THE REAPERS NOT TO...REAP.
THE CLIENT IS PAYING US TO DELIVER THE MERCHANDISE WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE...AND NOT TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS.
NOW BE GOOD LADS AND LOAD UP THE HEARSE!
YES, MISTRESS!

TOSS HER IN THE BOX, AND MAKE CERTAIN ALL THE LOCKS ARE PROPERLY SECURED.
THE STUN SHOULD KEEP HER QUIET FOR HOURS.
WE'RE NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES. LOCK HER AWAY.
PTT PTT PTT PTT PTT
AY! WE CAN HANDLE THIS. TELL UNDERTAKER TO SHOVE OFF!
RIGHT-O. AND 'ERE! ADD 'ER GUN TO THE WEAPONS CACHE!
THUD
EASY DOES IT, MATE!
RRRRR
THWOMP
WHAT WAS THAT?
OOF!

THA' WAS ME MATE!
YOU BLOO'Y CO--
WHAM
BAM
BASH
AAAWEEEE!!
UNGH...
STOP THE VEHICLE!
WHA'S THE TROUBLE BACK THERE!
SQUEEEE
WHAT'S THE...
STUN HER!
UGH...UNGH... ME GOOLIES...
ACT LIKE A GENTLEMAN, BE TREATED LIKE A GENTLEMAN!

BLIMEY!
AAAAAGH...
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT SOME FIGHT IN YOU AFTER ALL!

SHHNK
FLSH
GOOD! I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO A RIGHT PROPER TUSSLE WITH THE GREAT MECHANICAL HUNTRESS!
UNGH!
THWACK
WHACK
HUNGH!
THUMP
THAT ALL YOU GOT?
POW
YOU WANT A RIGHT PROPER TUSSLE?
WHOOSH
I THOUGHT YOU'D GIVE US AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT OF A CHALLENGE, GIVEN YOUR REPUTATION.
BUT I SUPPOSE YOU'RE JUST NOT QUITE UP TO SNUFF.
WHAM
THUMP

UNGH...
UNGH... HNGH...
KSH
THUMK
THUMK
MISTRESS!
...UNGH... UMPH...
THUMK
KSH
KSH
THUMK
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MISTRESS?
SHOULD WE PURSUE?
NO. LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ESCAPED OUR REACH... FOR NOW.
COLLECT THE OTHER REAPERS, IF THEY'RE STILL BREATHING.
THE CLIENT WILL NOT BE PLEASED.
LET ME DEAL WITH THE CLIENT.
WE'LL GET MECHANIKA ANOTHER DAY... FEE OR NO...
KRRNNNK
KRRNNNK
KRRNNNK
BOLLOCKS...

LATER THAT DAY...
LADY MECHANIKA!
OH DEAR, YOU LOOK TERRIBLE! LET ME SEND FOR A PHYSICIAN...
NO, NO, DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF. I APOLOGIZE FOR MY UNTIDY ATTIRE, I HAD A RATHER DIFFICULT MORNING.
OH! I AM SO SORRY TO HEAR DZAT! WOULD YOU CARE FOR A BONBON? I FIND DZEE CHOCOLATE ALWAYS BRIGHTENS MY DAY!
NO, BUT THANK YOU. I NEED TO HAVE A WORD WITH MR. LEWIS. IS HE HERE?
EUH, YES, HE... HE IZ UPSTAIRS BUT... HE IZ BUSY WITH DZEE WORK...
PERHAPS YOU COULD COME TO VISIT AT ANOTHER TIME?
DON'T WORRY, I'LL ONLY BE A MOMENT...

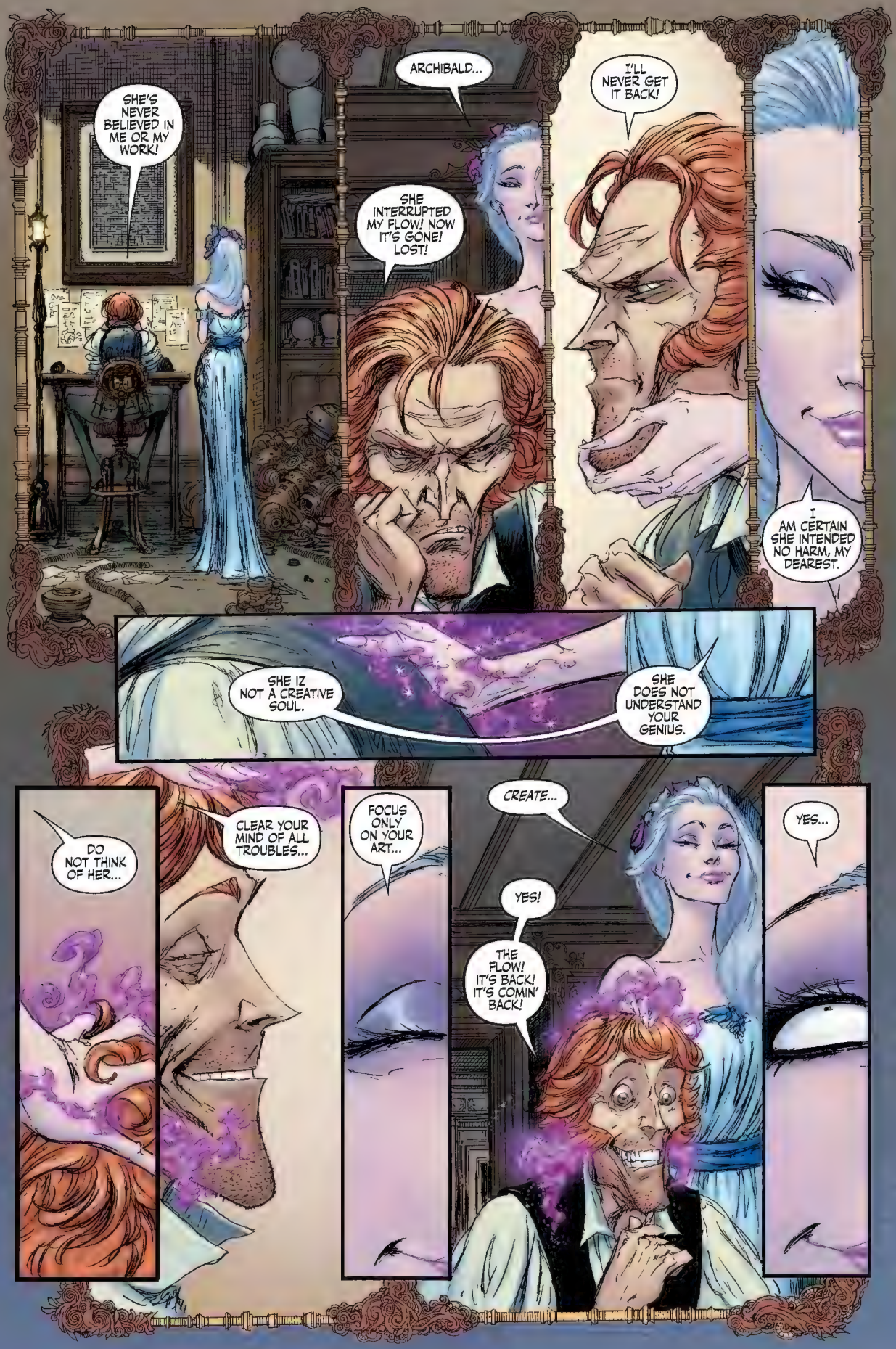
MR. LEWIS?
I JUST THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THE VERY EXCITING INCIDENT I HAD THIS MORNING.
OH, MECHANIKA... 'EY...
HUH...
WELL, SINCE MY PARTNER DECIDED HE HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN TO ACCOMPANY ME AS PROMISED, I WENT TO VISIT BLYTHE HOUSE ON MY OWN.
THE HOUSE WHERE THE MECHANICAL ARM WAS FOUND?
UH HUH...
WANT TO KNOW WHAT I FOUND THERE?
A WELCOME PARTY, BLACKPOOL'S GOONS WAITING FOR ME.
LUCKILY YOUR TRINKET ACTUALLY WORKED FOR ONCE OR I WOULD BE DEAD-- OR WORSE!
THUD
'EY, MY ARMGUARD OF ABSORPTION! DID YOU BREAK IT ALREADY? I CAN'T TAKE TIME TO FIX IT NOW. I'LL LOOK AT IT LATER...
LEWIS!
DID YOU HEAR ME?
YEAH, YEAH...BLYTHE HOUSE...I'LL BE THERE IN THE MORNIN'...

PUT THAT BLOODY RUBBISH ASIDE FOR A MINUTE AND LOOK AT ME!
I WAS ATTACKED THIS MORNING, NEARLY KILLED! BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T THERE TO SUPPORT ME!
NO...
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?
MY WORK! I WAS IN THE FLOW, THE IDEAS JUST COMIN' TO ME LIKE...LIKE MAGIC! I CAN'T STOP NOW...
WHO CARES ABOUT YOUR STUPID LITTLE SCRIBBLES! DIDN'T YOU HEAR--
WHO CARES?
WHO CARES?!
THIS IS MY LIFE!
I 'AVE ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU WANT TO GO ON ONE OF YOUR STUPID LIT'LE WILD GOOSE CHASES, ALWAYS YOUR FAITHFUL LIT'LE LACKEY, BUT THE ONE TIME I 'AVE SOMETHIN' BIG, SOMETHIN' IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE, YOU EXPECT ME TO DROP EVERYTHIN' TO 'ELP YOU!

WHAT? I--
YOU DON'T CARE ABOU' ME OR MY WORK OR WHAT'S IMPOR'ANT IN MY LIFE! ALL YOU CARE ABOU' IS YOURSELF AND YOUR DAMN OBSESSION!
WHO CARES ABOU' YOUR BLOODY ORIGINS? WHO CARES ABOU' WHOEVER MADE YOU MECHANICAL?
YOU COULD BE USIN' THE SKILLS YOU 'AVE, DOIN' GREAT AND IMPOR'ANT THINGS! INSTEAD YOU'RE STUCK IN THE PAST, AND YOU'VE BEEN DRAGGIN' ME DOWN WITH YOU!
LEWIS, ARE YOU--
KOFF KOFF KOFF KOFF KOFF
NO!
YOU'RE ALWAYS COMIN' IN 'ERE, BOMBARDIN' ME WITH YOUR NEGATIVITY! ALWAYS BELITTLIN' ME, ALWAYS BELITTLIN' MY WORK!
I HAVE NEVER--
"YOUR TRINKET ACTUALLY WORKED." "I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOU' THIS CONTRAPTION OF YOURS." YOU THINK I DON'T 'EAR IT?
LEANNA IS NEVER NEGATIVE, NEVER JOKES ABOU' MY INVENTIONS, NEVER MAKES ME DOUBT MY ABILITIES.
UNLIKE YOU SHE'S SUPPOR'IVE AND ENCOURAGIN'. YOU JUST TEAR ME DOWN!

ARE YOU BLOODY SERIOUS? I HAVEN'T BEEN SUPPORTIVE?
WHO LITERALLY PICKED YOU UP OUT OF THE GUTTER AND GAVE YOU WORK WHEN NO ONE ELSE WOULD EVEN TALK TO YOU?
WHO'S BEEN OUT EVERY NIGHT THE LAST FEW WEEKS, PICKING YOUR DRUNKEN ARSE OFF THE PUB FLOOR? MAKING SURE YOU GET HOME SAFE?
WHO ASKED YOU TO?!
I NEVER ASKED YOU TO DO ANY OF THOSE THINGS! I DON'T NEED A BLEEDIN' MOTHER HEN PECKIN' AFTER ME ALL THE TIME!
I'M A GROWN MAN! LET ME GET BLOODY PISSED IF I WANT TO GET BLOODY PISSED!
LET ME LIVE MY OWN LIFE!
WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE ME THE 'ELL ALONE!
HAPPY TO, CHAP!
BUGGER IT ALL...

YOU MUST FORGIVE ARCHIBALD. DZEE CREATIVE PROCESS AROUSES GREAT PASSIONS.
IT'S NO EXCUSE FOR ACTING LIKE A BLOOMIN' WANKER.
ALL DZEE ARTISTS ARE VOLATILE WHEN DZEY ARE CREATING. DZEY FEEL SO VERY DEEPLY, YOU SEE. IT IZ DZEIR PASSION.
KEATS, RAPHAEL, CHOPIN... DZEY ALL HAD DZEE BIG PERSONALITIES AS WELL. CARAVVAGIO WOULD FLY INTO AN UNCONTROLLABLE RAGE ONE MINUTE AND DZEN DANCE IN ECSTATIC JOY DZEE NEXT.
IT IZ DZEE NATURE OF DZEE ARTISTIC MIND.
YOU...YOU SPEAK AS IF YOU KNEW THEM.
TO KNOW DZEE ART IZ TO KNOW DZEE ARTIST, IZ DZEES NOT SO?
DO NOT WORRY YOURSELF OVER ARCHIBALD.
I WILL CALM HIM.
ARCHIBALD, MY DEAREST!


SHE'S NEVER BELIEVED IN ME OR MY WORK!
ARCHIBALD...
SHE INTERRUPTED MY FLOW! NOW IT'S GONE! LOST!
I'LL NEVER GET IT BACK!
I AM CERTAIN SHE INTENDED NO HARM, MY DEAREST.
SHE IZ NOT A CREATIVE SOUL.
SHE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR GENIUS.
DO NOT THINK OF HER...
CLEAR YOUR MIND OF ALL TROUBLES...
FOCUS ONLY ON YOUR ART...
CREATE...
YES!
THE FLOW! IT'S BACK! IT'S COMIN' BACK!
YES...

A FEW DAYS LATER, MECHANIKA CITY POLICE HEADQUARTERS.
I'VE HEARD OF THIS GRIMM AND HER REAPERS. VERY WELL TRAINED, VERY EXPENSIVE.
THEY REPUTEDLY ALWAYS GET THEIR MAN.
DON'T BE FLIPPANT. THIS IS SERIOUS. YOU COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!
BUT I WASN'T. BLACKPOOL WOULDN'T RISK DAMAGING ME.
I GUESS IT'S A GOOD THING, THEN, THAT I'M NOT A MAN.
WE DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN IT EVEN WAS BLACKPOOL.
BLACKPOOL HAS HIS OWN MEN. WHY WOULD HE GO TO THE TROUBLE AND EXPENSE TO HIRE THE REAPERS?
WHO ELSE WOULD ATTEMPT TO ABDUCT ME?

YOU HAVE A NUMBER OF ENEMIES, MECHANIKA.
AND DON'T FORGET YOUR MYSTERIOUS DOPPELGANGER. WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HER, HER WHEREABOUTS OR HER INTENTIONS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE MR. LEWIS WOULD NEGLECT TO ACCOMPANY YOU ON A POTENTIALLY PERILOUS ERRAND!
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN SO IMPORTANT THAT HE SHOULD MISS HIS APPOINTMENT?
NOTHING SHORT OF DEATH OR DISMEMBERMENT WOULD CAUSE ME TO DESERT YOU--DESERT ANY OF MY MEN--ON A DANGEROUS CASE!
IT REALLY WAS OF NO GREAT CONSEQUENCE. I OVERREACTED.
THE HOUSE HAD UNNERVED ME AND I WAS ANNOYED THAT I'D ALLOWED THOSE RUFFIANS TO GET THE JUMP ON ME. IT WAS UNFAIR OF ME TO BLAME MR. LEWIS.
IN ACTUALITY, IT'S PROBABLY BETTER THAT HE WASN'T THERE. HE'S THE ONE WHO COULD'VE GOTTEN SERIOUSLY HURT.
HE MADE A COMMITMENT TO YOU WHICH HE FAILED TO HONOR AND IT RESULTED IN YOUR INJURY.
I MUST SAY, I AM EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTED BY MR. LEWIS' BEHAVIOR. I THOUGHT BETTER OF HIM.

HE HASN'T BEEN ACTING LIKE HIMSELF. I'M A LITTLE CONCERNED.
HE'S BEEN COMPLETELY INFATUATED WITH WORK AND WITH... WITH THAT WOMAN.
WOMAN? WHAT WOMAN?
MRS. LEANNA SHI. A WIDOW HE'S BEEN GOING AROUND WITH...APPARENTLY THEY'RE ENGAGED.
HE'S BEEN ACTING ODD EVER SINCE MEETING HER.
AH. THERE'S A WOMAN.
NOW I UNDERSTAND MR. LEWIS' BEHAVIOR. NOT THAT IT EXCUSES IT, BUT AT LEAST I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY HE'S ACTING SO STRANGELY.
HOW DO YOU MEAN?
FALLING IN LOVE CAN BLIND YOU TO EVERYTHING ELSE.
SHIRKING YOUR DUTIES, IGNORING YOUR FRIENDS, COMING UP WITH ANY EXCUSE JUST TO SEE HER...ALL COMMON SYMPTOMS OF AN INFATUATION.
HERE ARE THE FILES YOU REQUESTED, INSPECTOR.
THANK YOU, MISS HOWARD. I'LL LOOK AT THEM LATER.
ARE YOU SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE, INSPECTOR?
I'M ONLY SPECULATING.
BUT I WOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT MR. LEWIS. I'M SURE HE'S JUST A BIT ENAMORED WITH THIS NEW LOVE.
HE'LL FORGET ABOUT HER AND IT'LL PASS.
OR HE'LL MARRY HER, AND IT'LL PASS.
EITHER WAY, I'M SURE HE'LL BE BACK TO NORMAL IN NO TIME.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
WHATEVER WAS I THINKING, ACQUIESCING TO AN OFFICER OF THE LAW?
SHOULD HAVE DONE IT MY WAY THE FIRST TIME.
IT'S NOT AS IF I WERE GOING TO STEAL ANYTHING. I JUST WANT TO TAKE A LOOK ABOUT.
IN AND OUT, WITH NO ONE THE WISER.
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

LADY MECHANIKA!
FRED! WHAT'S WRONG?
LADY MECHANIKA! YOU HAVE TO COME!
UNCLE ARCHIE WON'T WAKE UP!
IS HE DRUNK ALREADY? IT'S BARELY TIME FOR SUPPER!
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE WATCHING YOU WHEN YOUR GRANDFATHER IS AWAY ON EXPEDITION, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S ALWAYS WATCHING OVER HIM!
JUST LET HIM SLEEP IT OFF. I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH HIM IN THE MORNING.
I HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO RIGHT NOW THAN MOLLYCODDLE HIS GROWN ARSE.
HE HASN'T HAD ANYTHING TO DRINK! HE'S REALLY SICK!
HE'S BEEN FEELING BAD THE LAST FEW DAYS, SWEATING AND RETCHING, EVEN COUGHING UP BLOOD.
AFTER LUNCHEON TODAY HE SAID HE HAD A HEADACHE AND WENT TO TAKE A NAP, BUT HE'S BEEN ASLEEP EVER SINCE AND I CAN'T WAKE HIM UP!
WHAT?
I TRIED SMELLING SALTS, SPLASHING COLD WATER ON HIM, EVERYTHING! BUT NOTHING WORKS! HE DOESN'T REACT AT ALL!
OKAY, FRED. I HEAR YOU.
LET'S GO FIND DR. LITTLETON...

SHORTLY...
I'M SORRY, BUT I ...I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM.
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY INJURIES. HIS HEART AND BREATHING ARE NORMAL. BUT HE DOESN'T RESPOND TO ANY STIMULI.
PERHAPS SOMETHING HE INGESTED.
POISON?
THERE WAS A WOMAN, LIESEL, WHO WANTED HIM DEAD. I HEARD SHE'D ESCAPED FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.
IS IT POSSIBLE SHE COULD HAVE POISONED HIM?
I...I SUPPOSE IT'S POSSIBLE. FRANKLY, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT COULD BE.
I'D LIKE TO TAKE A BLOOD SAMPLE AND GET IT EXAMINED BY AN EXPERT WITH WHOM I AM ACQUAINTED.
OF COURSE. PLEASE.
I'LL LET YOU KNOW THE RESULTS AS SOON AS I GET WORD.
I'LL ALSO CONSULT WITH SOME SPECIALISTS WHO KNOW MORE ABOUT POISONS AND RARE NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS.
IN THE MEANWHILE, KEEP HIM COMFORTABLE, DON'T TRY TO MOVE HIM. IF YOU CAN, FEED HIM A BIT OF SIMPLE BROTH.
I CAN DO THAT. THANK YOU, DOCTOR.
DON'T WORRY, MISS WINIFRED. ONCE WE FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM, WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIX IT.
GOOD NIGHT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH UNCLE ARCHIE?
WE DON'T KNOW, MONTY. WE DON'T KNOW!
LADY MECHANIKA, WHAT IF HE NEVER WAKES UP?
I HAVE THE UTMOST TRUST IN DR. LITTLETON. HE'LL FIND THE ANSWER, I'M SURE OF IT.

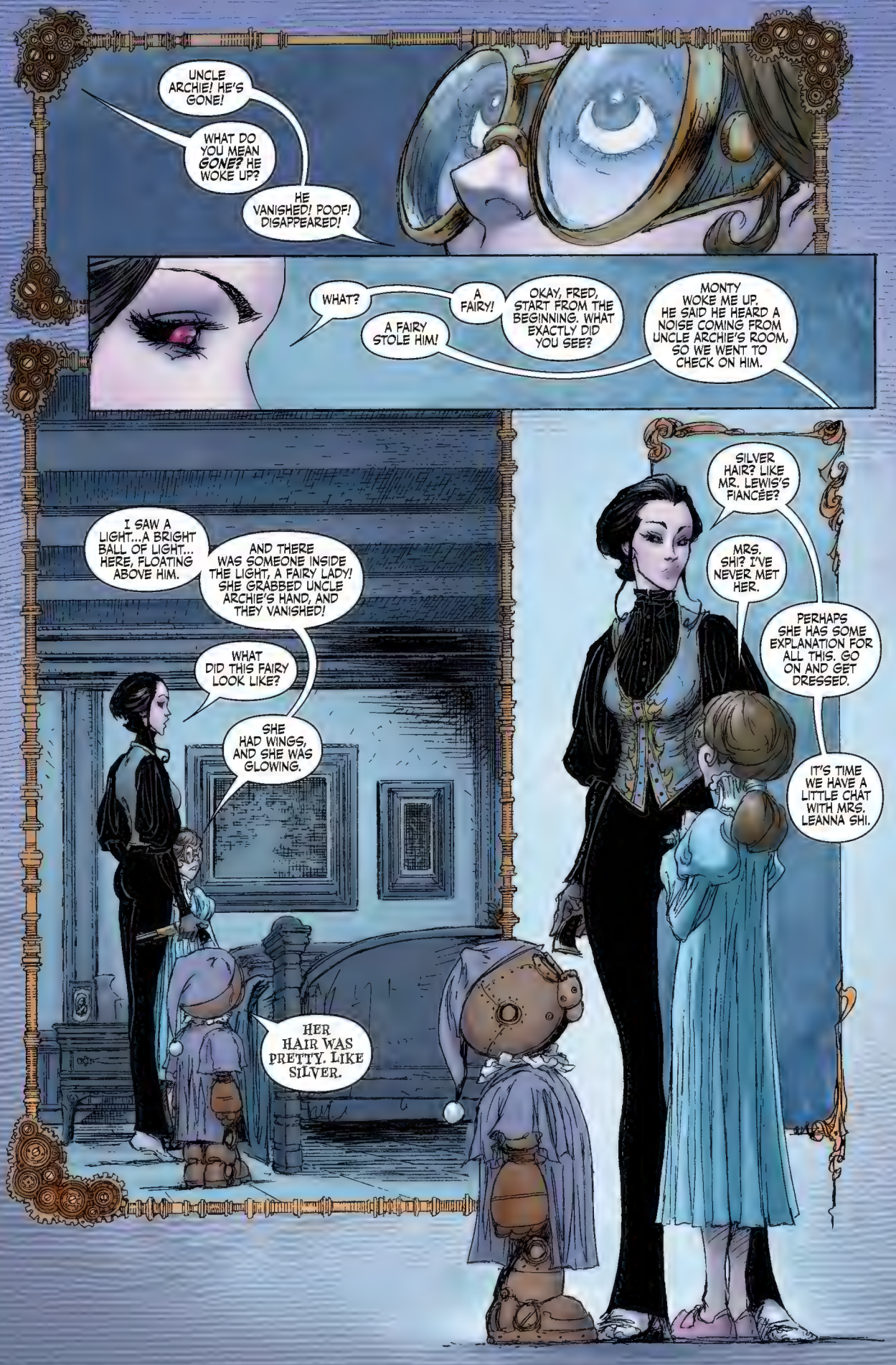
LATER THAT NIGHT...
ARCHIBALD...
LEE... LEANNA...

ARCHIBALD, MY DEAREST...
YOU HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM ME FOR TOO LONG...

IT IZ TIME WE MAKE OUR UNION ETERNAL.
YES...
I NEVER WANT TO BE AWAY FROM YOU AGAIN.
UNCLE ARCHIE?
WHERE'D UNCLE ARCHIE GO?
LEANNA... LEANNA!
IT HAS MADE YOU SICK...
I FEEL BETTER NOW... BETTER NOW THAT YOU'RE 'ERE!
LADY MECHANIKA!!!

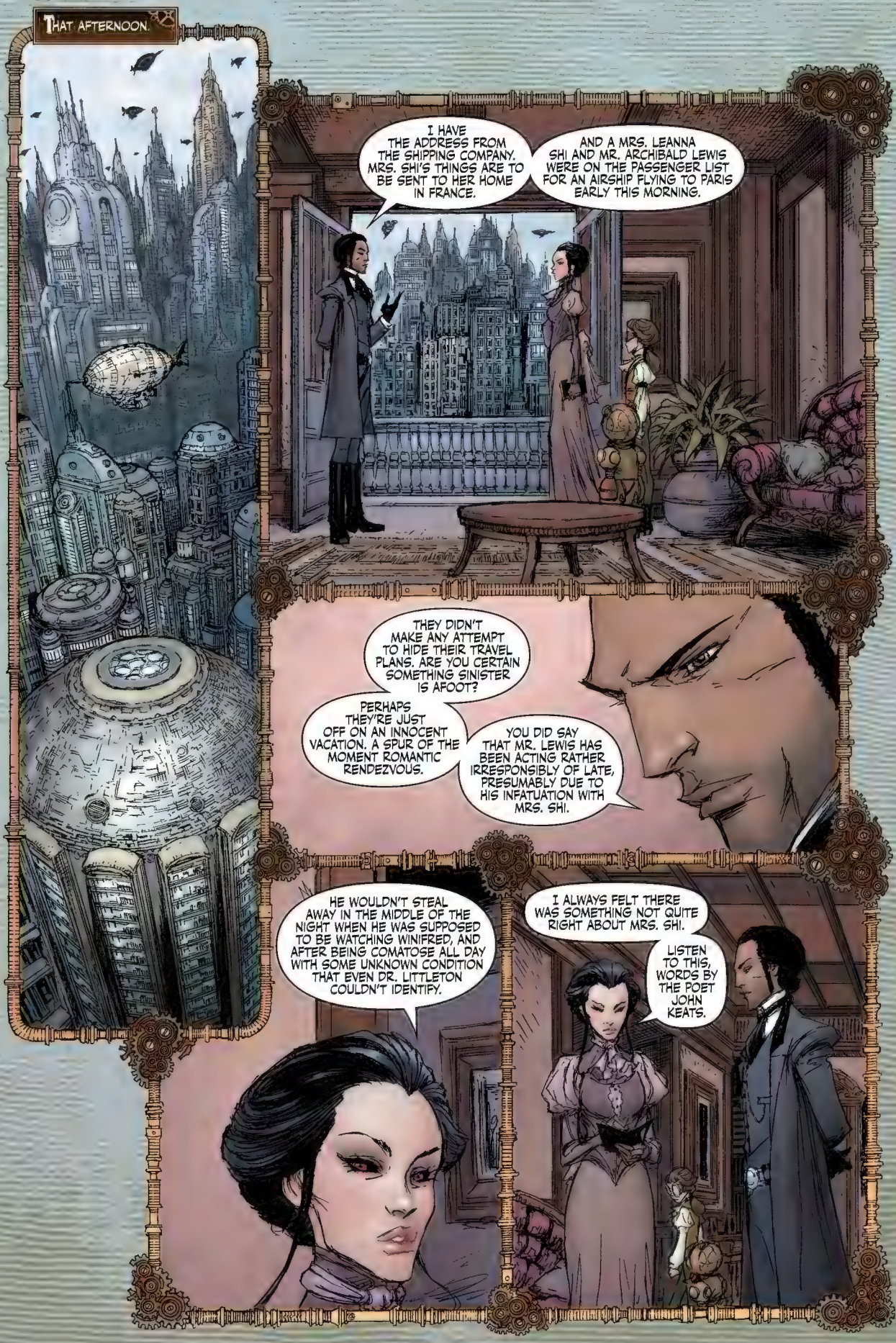
Chapter Three

LADY MECHANIKA!!!
FRED...
I'M COMING!
WHAT IS IT, FRED? WHAT'S WRONG?


UNCLE ARCHIE! HE'S GONE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN *GONE?* HE WOKE UP?
HE VANISHED! POOF! DISAPPEARED!
WHAT?
A FAIRY!
A FAIRY STOLE HIM!
OKAY, FRED, START FROM THE BEGINNING. WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU SEE?
MONTY WOKE ME UP. HE SAID HE HEARD A NOISE COMING FROM UNCLE ARCHIE'S ROOM, SO WE WENT TO CHECK ON HIM.
I SAW A LIGHT...A BRIGHT BALL OF LIGHT... HERE, FLOATING ABOVE HIM.
AND THERE WAS SOMEONE INSIDE THE LIGHT, A FAIRY LADY! SHE GRABBED UNCLE ARCHIE'S HAND, AND THEY VANISHED!
WHAT DID THIS FAIRY LOOK LIKE?
SHE HAD WINGS, AND SHE WAS GLOWING.
HER HAIR WAS PRETTY. LIKE SILVER.
SILVER HAIR? LIKE MR. LEWIS'S FIANCÉE?
MRS. SHI? I'VE NEVER MET HER.
PERHAPS SHE HAS SOME EXPLANATION FOR ALL THIS. GO ON AND GET DRESSED.
IT'S TIME WE HAVE A LITTLE CHAT WITH MRS. LEANNA SHI.

EXCUSE ME, WHERE MIGHT I FIND MRS. SHI?
OY, 'ELLO, MUM! YER LOOKIN' FER THE MISSUS, ARE YE?
YES, MRS. LEANNA SHI. IS SHE HERE?
I'M AFRAID NO', MUM. SHE'S GONE, AND NO' LIKE T' BE COMIN' BACK, I SHOULD FINK.
WE WAS 'IRED T' PACK UP SOME OF 'ER FINGS, COVER THE FURNITURE, AND CLOSE UP THE 'OUSE.
YOU AREN'T PART OF HER HOUSEHOLD? ARE ANY OF HER STAFF STILL HERE?
LOOK AT ALL THIS ART!
PRETTY!
OH NO, MUM. WORD IS SHE DIDN' 'AVE ANY SERVANTS OF 'ER OWN, BUT I DON' SEE 'OW THAT COULD BE 'LESS SHE 'AD WEE BROWNIES CLEANIN' UP AFTER 'ER. THE 'OUSE IS SPICK AND SPAN, TOP T' BOT'OM.
I FIGURE SHE MUST 'AVE TAKEN 'ER FOLK AWAY WIV 'ER, AND JUST 'IRED US LOCALS T' DEAL WIV THE PACKIN'.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE WENT?
I'M AFRAID NO', MUM. WE'RE JUST SUPPOSED T' GET EVERYFING BOXED UP AND READY FER THE SHIPPERS.
IF THAT'D BE ALL, MUM, I'D BEST BE GET'IN' BACK T' WORK.
WOW! A HANDWRITTEN NOCTURNE SIGNED CHOPIN...AND A JOURNAL OF UNPUBLISHED POEMS BY KEATS!
LOOK!
HEY! THAT'S HER!
LADY MECHANIKA!
THIS IS THE FAIRY!

THIS IS THE LADY I SAW TAKE UNCLE ARCHIE!
ARE YOU SURE, FRED? THAT'S LEWIS'S FIANCÉE, MRS. LEANNA SHI.
IT'S HER! SHE'S THE FAIRY!
LOOK AT THE SIGNATURE. THIS PORTRAIT WAS PAINTED BY LORENZO DI MATTEO!
MR. LEWIS MENTIONED SHE WAS MARRIED TO A FAMOUS ARTIST. PERHAPS IT WAS LORENZO, OR POSSIBLY A FRIEND OF HIS.
BUT LORENZO DIED IN 1664. THIS PAINTING WAS MADE OVER 200 YEARS AGO!
I TOLD YOU IT WAS A FAIRY!
AND I DON'T THINK SHE CARES ABOUT UNCLE ARCHIE AT ALL. I THINK SHE JUST WANTS TO STEAL HIS WORK!
THIS HOUSE IS FILLED WITH ORIGINAL PIECES BY CHOPIN, KEATS, LORENZO... ALL CREATIVE GENIUSES, JUST LIKE UNCLE ARCHIE!
AND ALL THOSE ARTISTS HAD ONE OTHER THING IN COMMON...
THEY ALL DIED YOUNG...


That afternoon.
I have the address from the shipping company. Mrs. Shi's things are to be sent to her home in France.
And a Mrs. Leanna Shi and Mr. Archibald Lewis were on the passenger list for an airship flying to Paris early this morning.
They didn't make any attempt to hide their travel plans. Are you certain something sinister is afoot?
Perhaps they're just off on an innocent vacation. A spur of the moment romantic rendezvous.
You did say that Mr. Lewis has been acting rather irresponsibly of late, presumably due to his infatuation with Mrs. Shi.
He wouldn't steal away in the middle of the night when he was supposed to be watching Winifred, and after being comatose all day with some unknown condition that even Dr. Littleton couldn't identify.
I always felt there was something not quite right about Mrs. Shi.
Listen to this, words by the poet John Keats.

"I CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT YOU-- I AM FORGETFUL OF EVERY THING BUT SEEING YOU AGAIN-- MY LIFE SEEMS TO STOP THERE-- I SEE NO FURTHER. YOU HAVE ABSORB'D ME."
A TAD OVERDRAMATIC, BUT TYPICAL POESY, I IMAGINE.
IT WASN'T FROM A PUBLISHED POEM, BUT A HANDWRITTEN JOURNAL FOUND IN MRS. SHI'S HOME. ALONG WITH A PORTRAIT OF HER, PAINTED 200 YEARS AGO.
I DID SOME RESEARCH ON THE ARTISTS WHOSE WORK WE FOUND THERE.
KEATS DIED IN 1821, AGE 25, FROM AN UNKNOWN ILLNESS, COUGHING UP BLOOD JUST LIKE MR. LEWIS.
AND THE TIME SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH HE WAS KNOWN TO BE ENAMORED OF A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN.
LORENZO DI MATTEO, ARTIST. DIED 1664 AT AGE 32. CAUSE OF DEATH UNKNOWN.
FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN, COMPOSER. DIED 1849, AGE 39. CAUSE OF DEATH UNKNOWN.
TOMMASO MASACCIO, PAINTER. DIED 1428, AGE 26. CAUSE OF DEATH UNKNOWN.
THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHERS. ARTISTS, WRITERS, INVENTORS, MUSICIANS...ALL THE SAME STORY.
YOU THINK MRS. SHI IS WHAT, IMMORTAL? THAT SHE SOMEHOW CAUSED THEIR DEATHS?
FRED BELIEVES SHE'S FAE, FROM THE REALM OF FAERIE. AND I THINK IT'S A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.
KEATS HIMSELF WROTE A POEM, *LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI*, IN WHICH HE DESCRIBES A MAN FALLING IN LOVE WITH A BEAUTIFUL FAIRY LADY WHO EVENTUALLY KILLS HIM.
WHATEVER SHE IS, I BELIEVE MR. LEWIS IS IN DANGER...

FRED, WHAT IS ALL THAT AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
ALL THE BOOKS ON FAIRIES I COULD FIND FROM THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.
I'M GOING TO FRANCE.
I'M GOING TO SAVE UNCLE ARCHIE.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING...

I HAVE GRAVE MISGIVINGS ABOUT LETTING YOU COME ALONG, WINIFRED.

YOU NEED ME TO HELP FIGURE OUT HOW TO STOP THE FAIRY!

I REMEMBER EVERYTHING I READ, AND MOST OF THESE BOOKS AREN'T EVEN IN ENGLISH.

CAN YOU READ LATIN, OR GREEK, OR GAELIC, OR FRENCH, OR--

I KNOW, I KNOW. I HEARD YOUR ARGUMENTS BEFORE, AND I AGREED TO LET YOU HELP.

BUT PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU STAYED AT THE HOTEL IN PARIS WHEN I GO CONFRONT MR. LEWIS AND MRS. SHI.

NO! YOU HAVE TO LET ME GO! YOU HAVE TO LET ME TALK TO UNCLE ARCHIE!

I'M HIS ONLY FAMILY. HE'LL LISTEN TO ME. I'LL CONVINCE HIM HE'S UNDER THE FAIRY'S SPELL, PERSUADE HIM TO COME BACK HOME.

HE WON'T LEAVE ME. HE CAN'T.

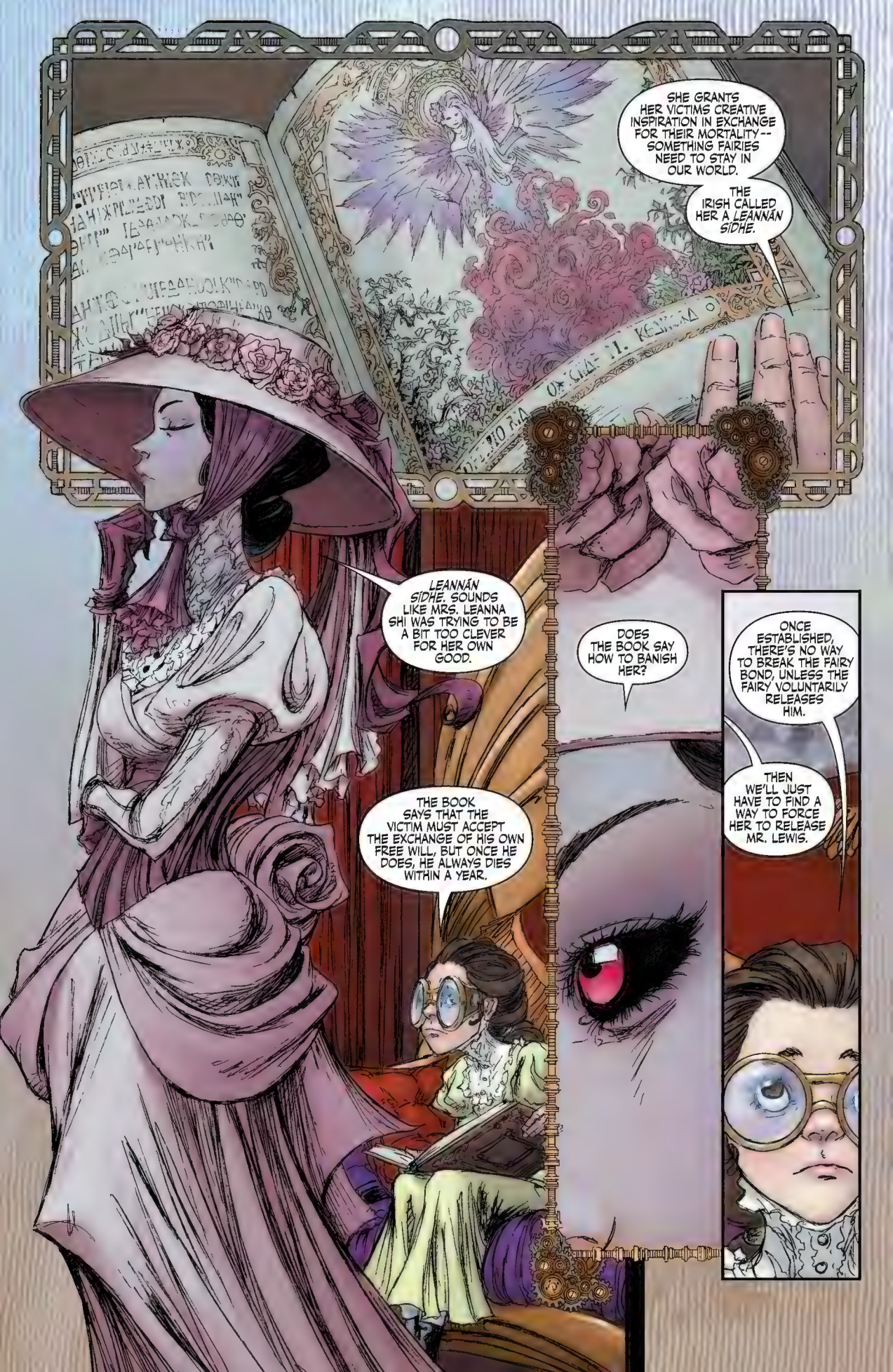
HE... HE'S ALL THAT I HAVE LEFT OF MY MOTHER.

SIGH VERY WELL, FRED.

BUT REMEMBER WHAT YOU PROMISED!

I'LL DO EVERYTHING YOU SAY, AND IF THERE'S ANY SIGN OF TROUBLE MONTY AND I WILL STAY AWAY, NO ARGUMENTS, NO HESITATION. I PROMISE.

AND LOOK! I'VE FOUND A DESCRIPTION THAT MATCHES THE FAIRY!


SHE GRANTS HER VICTIMS CREATIVE INSPIRATION IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR MORTALITY-- SOMETHING FAIRIES NEED TO STAY IN OUR WORLD.
THE IRISH CALLED HER A *LEANNÁN SÍDHE*.
LEANNÁN SÍDHE. SOUNDS LIKE MRS. LEANNA SHI WAS TRYING TO BE A BIT TOO CLEVER FOR HER OWN GOOD.
THE BOOK SAYS THAT THE VICTIM MUST ACCEPT THE EXCHANGE OF HIS OWN FREE WILL, BUT ONCE HE DOES, HE ALWAYS DIES WITHIN A YEAR.
DOES THE BOOK SAY HOW TO BANISH HER?
ONCE ESTABLISHED, THERE'S NO WAY TO BREAK THE FAIRY BOND, UNLESS THE FAIRY VOLUNTARILY RELEASES HIM.
THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO FORCE HER TO RELEASE MR. LEWIS.

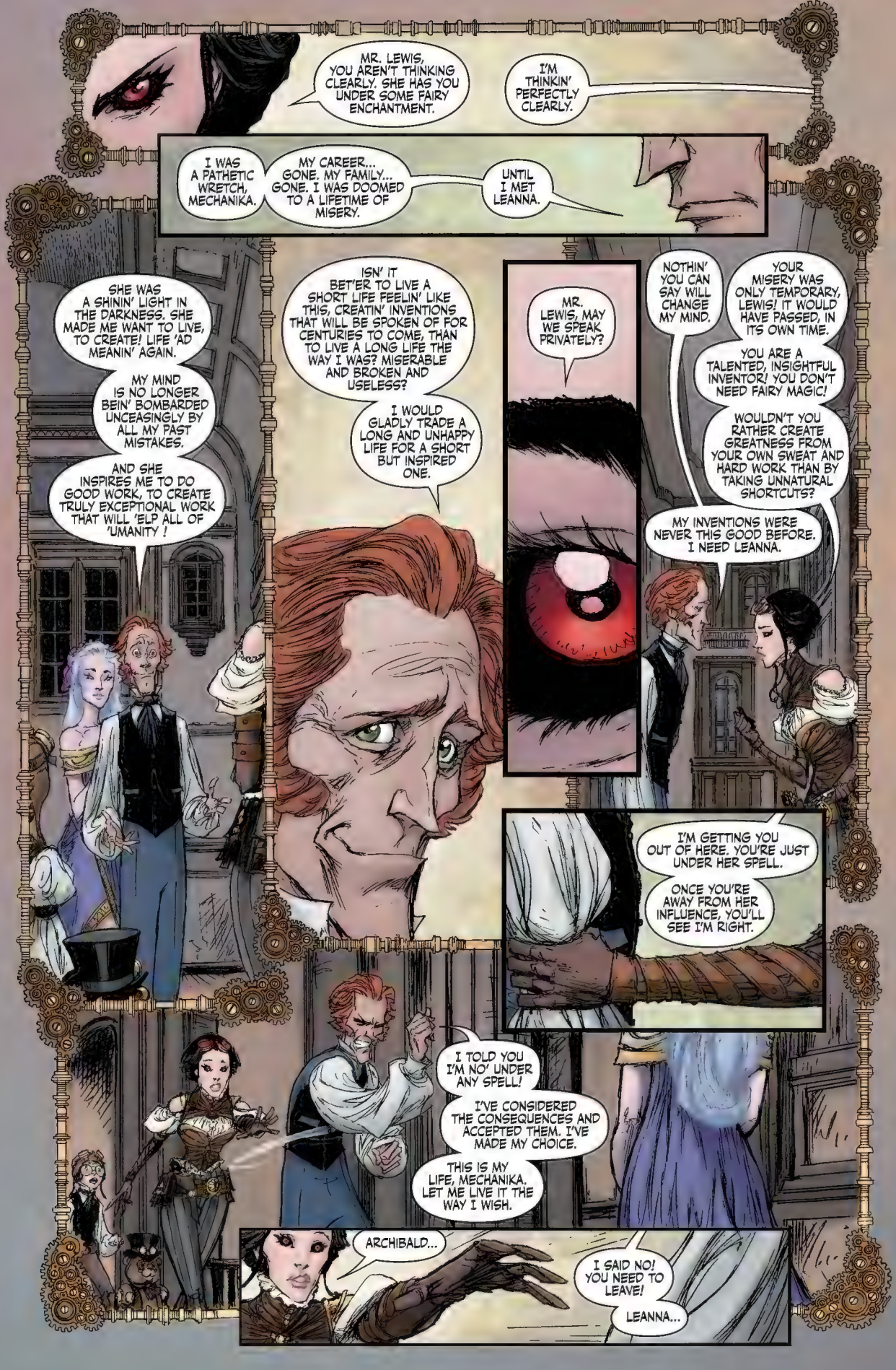
ALL THE LEGENDS CLAIM THAT FAIRIES CAN'T LIE, THOUGH THEY RARELY SPEAK THE FULL TRUTH.
IF WE MAKE HER TAKE AN OATH, A BINDING OATH NEVER TO HARM UNCLE ARCHIE, SHE WILL HAVE TO HONOR IT.
THEY ALSO SAY FAIRIES CAN'T ABIDE COLD IRON.
THAT MUCH, I THINK, IS TRUE. SHE CLAIMED SHE HAD A SENSITIVITY TO IRON WHEN SHE SHOOK MY HAND.
I BROUGHT SHACKLES AND BULLETS MADE OF IRON. PERHAPS WE CAN USE THEM TO TRAP HER.
WHAT HAPPENS TO UNCLE ARCHIE IF THE FAIRY IS TRAPPED BY IRON?
HE MIGHT BE FREED, OR HE MIGHT BE HURT TOO, THROUGH THE FAIRY BOND.
HE COULD DIE?
I'M AFRAID IT'S A POSSIBILITY, FRED. BUT IF WE DO NOTHING, HE WILL DIE FOR CERTAIN.

CHÂTEAU DE FÉE, JUST OUTSIDE PARIS, FRANCE.
ding ding dong
LADY MECHANIKA! WHAT ARE YOU--
RELEASE? WHAT EVER DO YOU MEAN? HE IZ NO CAPTIVE HERE.
UNCLE ARCHIE WOULDN'T GET MARRIED WITHOUT ME, WITHOUT HIS FAMILY!
RELEASE MR. LEWIS.
I THOUGHT YOUR KIND COULDN'T LIE.
IT IZ NO LIE. ARCHIBALD IZ HERE OF HIS OWN ACCORD. WE ARE TO BE MARRIED ON SUNDAY.
OH! YOU MUST BE WINIFRED!
ARCHIBALD SPEAKS OF YOU OFTEN. HE LOVES YOU VERY MUCH.
WE ARE SO SORRY WE HAD TO LEAVE OF A SUDDEN, BUT ARCHIBALD WAS SICK.

YOU MADE HIM SICK!
I HAD NO WISH FOR HIM TO BECOME ILL. I BROUGHT HIM HOME, SO I COULD CARE FOR HIM. HE IZ WELL NOW, I PROMISE YOU.
AND NOW THAT HE IZ HERE WE CAN WED, AND ON BELTANE.
ARCHIBALD WROTE A LETTER TO YOU, TO APOLOGIZE, BUT IT WOULD NOT HAVE ARRIVED YET. HE IZ TO MOVE HERE, TO LIVE WITH ME, AFTER WE ARE MARRIED.
NO! YOU HAVE HIM ENSPELLED! HE WOULDN'T LEAVE ME ALL ALONE!
STAY BEHIND ME, FRED. SHE MAY BE DANGEROUS.
I WOULD NEVER HURT HER!
I INTEND NO HARM TO EITHER OF YOU, OR TO ARCHIBALD! HE IZ MY LOVE!
I KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR "LOVES".
THEY ALL DIE.
THE BULLETS ARE MADE FROM IRON.
FREE MR. LEWIS FROM YOUR THRALL, OR I WILL FIRE.
YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND! I--
WWISHH

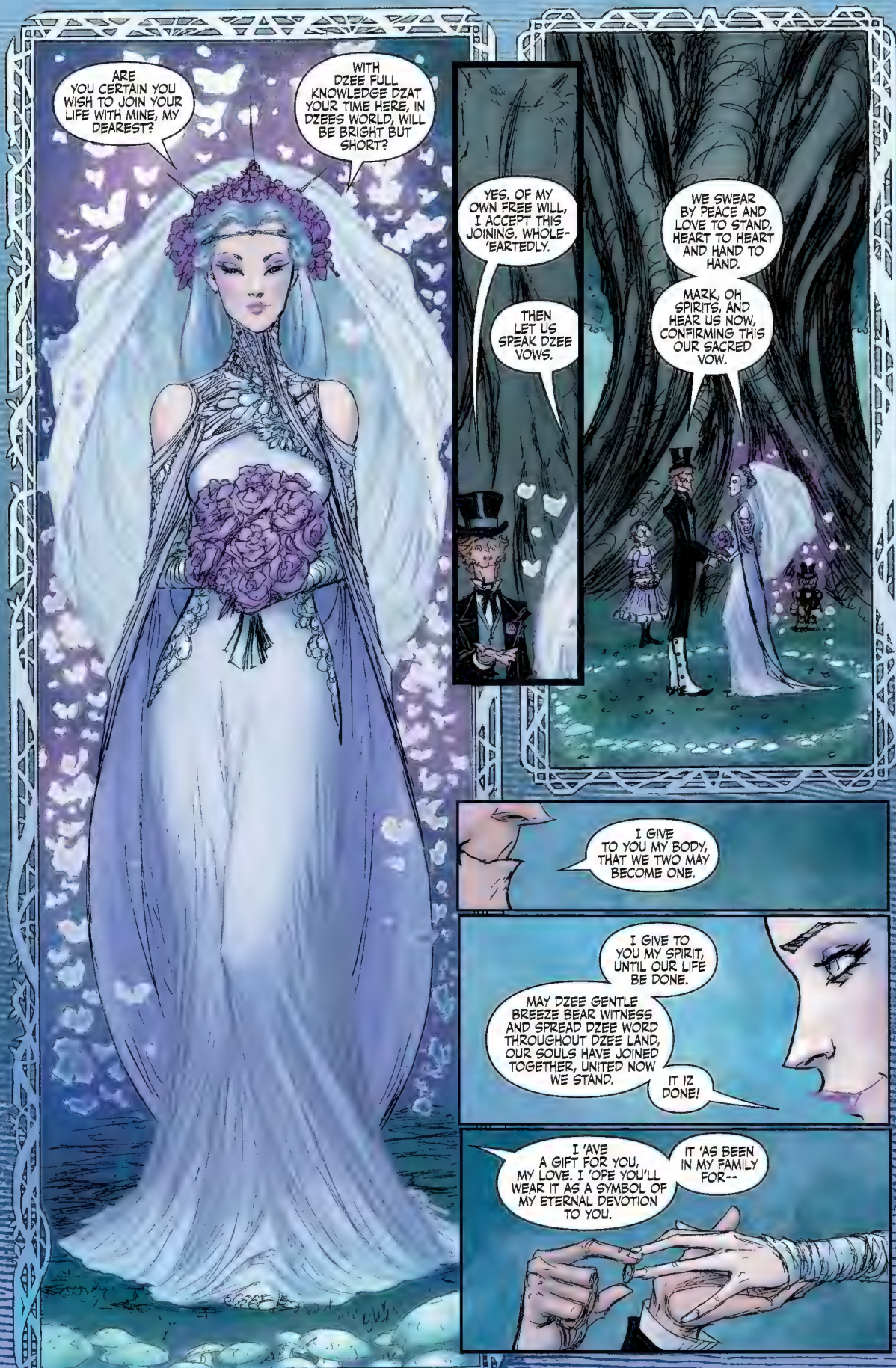
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AREN'T HUMAN.
I HAVE NEVER CLAIMED TO BE HUMAN.
I LOVE ARCHIBALD! HIS ENERGY IZ PURE AND BRIGHT! HE IZ A TRUE ARTIST.
I GIFT HIM WITH IMMORTALITY, AND HE GIVES ME HIS MORTALITY. WHY IZ DZEES WRONG?
YOU'RE KILLING HIM! HE WAS DYING BEFORE MY EYES!
HE IZ MORTAL. ALL MORTALS DIE. BUT HIS SOUL, HIS ART, WILL LIVE FOREVER.
I WON'T LET YOU KILL HIM BEFORE HIS TIME!
BLAM
FWUSHHH
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOUR PERCEPTION OF TIME IZ LIMITED!
MAYHAP. BUT I AM ONLY MORTAL, AS IS MR. LEWIS.
YES, HE WILL DIE. BUT IN HIS MORTAL TIME, IN HIS MORTAL WAY. NOT YOURS.
YOU MUST TRY TO SEE! AN INFINITY EXISTS IN ONE OF YOUR SECONDS. AND AN INFINITY EXISTS IN ONE OF YOUR CENTURIES.
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF YOUR MORTAL BODY LIVES IN ONE INFINITY OR DZEE OTHER?
IZ IT NOT MORE IMPORTANT TO CREATE DZEE ART DZAT TRANSCENDS TIME?
NO.
RELEASE MR. LEWIS FROM YOUR SPELL!

LEANNA!
I THOUGHT I 'EARD GUNSHOTS!
ARE YOU ALL RIGH'? WHAT--
STEP AWAY FROM HER, MR. LEWIS.
MECHANIKA? AND FRED!
WHY ARE YOU 'ERE? WHAT WERE YOU SHOOTIN' AT?
MRS. SHI ISN'T WHAT SHE APPEARS TO BE.
SHE ISN'T HUMAN.
SHE'S A FAIRY!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOU'? WERE YOU SHOOTIN' AT LEANNA?
OH, IS THA' ALL? YOU NEEDN' BE CONCERNED. SHE'S A GOOD FAIRY!
I TOLD YOU SHE'S MY MUSE! SHE'S THE REASON I'M CREATIN' ALL THESE WONDERFUL INVENTIONS.
YOUR DESIGNS COME FROM YOU, MY DEAREST, NOT ME. I ONLY GIVE A LITTLE INSPIRATION.
SO, SHE REVEALED HER TRUE NATURE TO YOU.
DID SHE ALSO TELL YOU WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU STAY WITH HER?
YOU'LL DIE, MR. LEWIS.
YES, I KNOW.
I 'AVE TO GIVE 'ER SOME OF MY MORTALITY SO SHE CAN STAY 'ERE IN OUR WORLD. WITHOUT IT SHE'D 'AVE TO RETURN TO THE LAND OF FAERIE.
SEEMS LIKE A FAIR EXCHANGE TO ME.
ALL OF HER PAST "LOVES" DIED WITHIN A YEAR OF MEETING HER!
SHE DOESN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT YOU, UNCLE ARCHIE! SHE'S JUST TRYING TO STEAL YOUR WORK, JUST LIKE SHE DID TO THE OTHERS!
OH, FRED, IT ISN' LIKE THAT AT ALL! LEANNA ISN' TRYIN' TO STEAL MY WORK, SHE'S 'ELPIN' ME TO CREATE IT!
SHE 'ELPED THOSE OTHERS TOO, 'ELPED THEM BECOME TRULY GREAT, JUST LIKE MY WORK WILL BE!
YOU'D LIKE LEANNA, FRED. YOU LOVE FAIRIES! AND NOW YOU GET TO 'AVE A FAIRY AUNT!


MR. LEWIS, YOU AREN'T THINKING CLEARLY. SHE HAS YOU UNDER SOME FAIRY ENCHANTMENT.
I'M THINKIN' PERFECTLY CLEARLY.
I WAS A PATHETIC WRETCH, MECHANIKA.
MY CAREER... GONE. MY FAMILY... GONE. I WAS DOOMED TO A LIFETIME OF MISERY.
UNTIL I MET LEANNA.
SHE WAS A SHININ' LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS. SHE MADE ME WANT TO LIVE, TO CREATE! LIFE 'AD MEANIN' AGAIN.
MY MIND IS NO LONGER BEIN' BOMBARDED UNCEASINGLY BY ALL MY PAST MISTAKES.
AND SHE INSPIRES ME TO DO GOOD WORK, TO CREATE TRULY EXCEPTIONAL WORK THAT WILL 'ELP ALL OF 'UMANITY !
ISN' IT BET'ER TO LIVE A SHORT LIFE FEELIN' LIKE THIS, CREATIN' INVENTIONS THAT WILL BE SPOKEN OF FOR CENTURIES TO COME, THAN TO LIVE A LONG LIFE THE WAY I WAS? MISERABLE AND BROKEN AND USELESS?
I WOULD GLADLY TRADE A LONG AND UNHAPPY LIFE FOR A SHORT BUT INSPIRED ONE.
MR. LEWIS, MAY WE SPEAK PRIVATELY?
NOTHIN' YOU CAN SAY WILL CHANGE MY MIND.
YOUR MISERY WAS ONLY TEMPORARY, LEWIS! IT WOULD HAVE PASSED, IN ITS OWN TIME.
YOU ARE A TALENTED, INSIGHTFUL INVENTOR! YOU DON'T NEED FAIRY MAGIC!
WOULDN'T YOU RATHER CREATE GREATNESS FROM YOUR OWN SWEAT AND HARD WORK THAN BY TAKING UNNATURAL SHORTCUTS?
MY INVENTIONS WERE NEVER THIS GOOD BEFORE. I NEED LEANNA.
I'M GETTING YOU OUT OF HERE. YOU'RE JUST UNDER HER SPELL.
ONCE YOU'RE AWAY FROM HER INFLUENCE, YOU'LL SEE I'M RIGHT.
I TOLD YOU I'M NO' UNDER ANY SPELL!
I'VE CONSIDERED THE CONSEQUENCES AND ACCEPTED THEM. I'VE MADE MY CHOICE.
THIS IS MY LIFE, MECHANIKA. LET ME LIVE IT THE WAY I WISH.
ARCHIBALD...
I SAID NO! YOU NEED TO LEAVE!
LEANNA...

OH, BUT MY DEAREST, SURELY WE CAN EXPLAIN...
SHE'S NEVER UNDERSTOOD OR APPRECIA'ED MY ART. SHE WILL NEVER ACCEPT MY DECISION.
SEND HER AWAY.
UNCLE ARCHIE, NO! WE'RE JUST TRYING TO HELP! WE'RE THE ONES WHO REALLY CARE ABOUT YOU!
PLEASE, UNCLE ARCHIE! DON'T LEAVE ME!
OH FRED, I'M SORRY. I DON' WANT TO LEAVE YOU, BUT THIS IS SOMETHIN' I 'AVE TO DO.
I KNOW IT'S 'ARD TO UNDERSTAND, BUT I WAS NO GOOD TO YOU THE WAY I WAS.
LEANNA MAKES ME A BET'ER PERSON. I NEED 'ER.
BUT I NEED YOU!
SHE IZ RIGHT, MY DEAREST. CAN'T SHE STAY JUST FOR DZEE WEDDING?
YOU SHOULD HAVE FAMILY HERE TO WITNESS OUR BONDING.
I'LL VISIT YOU, WHILE I CAN. YOU'LL BE A YOUNG LADY BY THE TIME I 'AVE TO...GO. YOU WON'T NEED ME ANYMORE.
I'LL ALWAYS NEED YOU, UNCLE ARCHIE.
AT LEAST LET ME STAY FOR THE WEDDING! IT ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU TO GET MARRIED WITHOUT FAMILY PRESENT!
VERY WELL. YOU MAY COME, FRED.
BUT NO' YOU, MECHANIKA, NO' UNLESS YOU ACCEPT MY CHOICE.
I WILL NEVER ACCEPT YOU GIVING UP YOUR LIFE.
AND I WILL NEVER GIVE UP MY MUSE.
SO I GUESS THIS IS GOODBYE.
SLAM
LEWIS! YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
LEWIS!
I'M SORRY, FRED. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEFEAT HER. IF I COULD JUST GET HIM AWAY FROM HER!
I HAVE AN IDEA.

THREE DAYS LATER, ON THE HALLOWED NIGHT OF BELTANE...
I REALLY DO HOPE YOU'LL BE HAPPY, UNCLE ARCHIE.
THANK YOU, FRED. I WILL BE. I AM.
'APPIER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN!
HERE. I WANT YOU TO HAVE THIS.
WHY, THIS LOOKS LIKE...
IT'S GRANDMA LEWIS'S WEDDING RING. SHE GAVE IT TO MY MOTHER. I'VE KEPT IT SINCE... EVER SINCE.
I KNOW SHE'D WANT YOU TO GIVE IT TO LEANNA. TO WELCOME HER TO THE FAMILY.
THANK YOU, FRED. IT'S PERFECT.
MY DEAREST...
LEANNA...


ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU WISH TO JOIN YOUR LIFE WITH MINE, MY DEAREST?
WITH DZEE FULL KNOWLEDGE DZAT YOUR TIME HERE, IN DZEES WORLD, WILL BE BRIGHT BUT SHORT?
YES. OF MY OWN FREE WILL, I ACCEPT THIS JOINING. WHOLE-'EARTEDLY.
THEN LET US SPEAK DZEE VOWS.
WE SWEAR BY PEACE AND LOVE TO STAND, HEART TO HEART AND HAND TO HAND.
MARK, OH SPIRITS, AND HEAR US NOW, CONFIRMING THIS OUR SACRED VOW.
I GIVE TO YOU MY BODY, THAT WE TWO MAY BECOME ONE.
I GIVE TO YOU MY SPIRIT, UNTIL OUR LIFE BE DONE.
MAY DZEE GENTLE BREEZE BEAR WITNESS AND SPREAD DZEE WORD THROUGHOUT DZEE LAND, OUR SOULS HAVE JOINED TOGETHER, UNITED NOW WE STAND.
IT IZ DONE!
I 'AVE A GIFT FOR YOU, MY LOVE. I 'OPE YOU'LL WEAR IT AS A SYMBOL OF MY ETERNAL DEVOTION TO YOU.
IT 'AS BEEN IN MY FAMILY FOR--

AAAAHHHHH!!!!
LEANNA...UNGH... WHAT IS IT...WHAT'S WRONG? I FEEL... WEAK...
GET HER, MONTY!
DZEE RING... DZEE RING! IT IZ MADE OF DZEE IRON!
TAKE IT OFF...TAKE IT OFF!
I GOT HER, FRED!
LEE... LEANNA...
NO, UNCLE ARCHIE! THIS IS THE ONLY WAY!
FRED? YOU...YOU DID THIS?
KLNK KLNK
KLNK
YOU ARE TRAPPED, FAIRY.
KLNK
ENCIRCLED BY COLD IRON.
CLK
NO... DON'T...
CLK
WHY ARE YOU... DOING DZEES...
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE.
YOU WILL REMAIN TRAPPED IN THESE IRON CHAINS FOREVER UNLESS YOU RELEASE MR. LEWIS FROM YOUR FAIRY BOND.

ARCHIBALD HAS MADE HIS CHOICE...HE HAS CHOSEN DZEES PATH... WITH NO INFLUENCE... FROM ME...
YOU KNOW DZEES TO BE TRUE...YOU KNOW... I CANNOT... LIE...
YES, HIS MORTAL LIFE...WILL BE SHORT...BUT HIS ART...HIS ART WILL LIVE...FOREVER...
CAN YOU NOT RESPECT HIM...RESPECT HOW HE...WISHES TO LIVE?
IF HIS MORTAL LIFE IS SO INCON-SEQUENTIAL, WHY WOULD YOU WISH TO STEAL IT? RELEASE HIM!
MECHANIKA... NO...
I...CHERISH... DZEE ARTISTS...I REVERE...DZEE ART! DZEE MUSIC...DZEE POETRY...DZEE CREATIVITY!
DZEEZ THINGS...DO NOT EXIST...IN THE LAND OF THE FAE.
I LOVE ARCHIBALD...TRULY... HIS CREATIVITY...HIS PASSION...HIS GIFT...I INSPIRE HIM...AND HE... INSPIRES ME...
PLEASE...WE ONLY WISH...TO BE... TOGETHER...
YOU'RE KILLING 'ER... MECHANIKA! YOU'RE KILLING...ME!
OUR LIVES... ARE JOINED. THE IRON...IT'S DRAININ' MY... MORTALITY...I WILL DIE... IF SHE REMAINS ...TRAPPED!
HE SPEAKS... DZEE TRUTH. DZEE IRON...HE WILL DIE IN MINUTES...IF I AM NOT...FREED.
HE WOULD DIE ANYWAY, IN MONTHS, IF HE STAYS WITH YOU. WHAT DOES IT MATTER, ONE INFINITY OR THE OTHER?
BREAK THE BOND.
PLEASE... WE ARE NOT... HARMING ANYONE...
BREAK THE BOND. SWEAR IT.
PROMISE TO RELEASE HIM, NEVER TO RETURN.

MY DEAREST...
NO, NO! LEANNA...DON' DO IT!
YOU ARE THE LIGHT...THAT SHINES THROUGH...THE DARKNESS! I CANNOT LIVE...WITHOUT YOU!
IT'S OKAY, UNCLE ARCHIE! EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY ONCE THE FAIRY IS GONE.
DON' DO THIS...PLEASE... PLEASE!
SHE WILL KILL YOUR LIGHT... MY LOVE...SHE WILL KILL... US BOTH...
I AM SORRY...MY DEAREST...
I WILL RELEASE HIM.
LEANNA! NO!
MECHANIKA... STOP THIS! YOU CANNOT...DO THIS! YOU 'AVE...NO RIGHT!
THIS IS MY CHOICE...MY... CHOICE!
SAY THE WORDS, FAIRY. SWEAR IT.
I SWEAR IT...BY DZEE SUN AND DZEE MOON...I SWEAR TO RELEASE ARCHIBALD FROM OUR BOND...TO LEAVE HIM AND NEVER RETURN.
I SWEAR IT...
NOOOO!
CLK

YOU ARE DZEE LIGHT, MY DEAREST. I WAS ONLY DZEE GUIDE.
I BELIEVE IN YOU, ARCHIBALD...
YOU WILL SHINE ON, BRIGHTER THAN EVER, WITHOUT ME.
LEANNA, NO...DON'T LEAVE ME...NO...
FAREWELL, MY DEAREST...
LEANNA!!!!!!
NOOOOOOOO!!!!
NO...

TWO WEEKS LATER. MECHANIKA CITY.
CRASH
SMASH
MR. LEWIS?
FRED SENT YOU SOME SOUP. SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I'M GOING OUT ON A JOB. YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME, IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU TO GET OUT AGAIN.
GLUG GLUG
:SIGH: I AM SORRY, ARCHIBALD.
I'M SORRY FOR THE LOSS YOU'RE FEELING. BUT I'M NOT SORRY FOR SAVING YOUR LIFE.
YOU'LL FIND THAT LIGHT AGAIN, I KNOW IT. BY YOUR OWN MERITS, AND IN YOUR OWN TIME.
YOU HAVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO CARE ABOUT YOU, MR. LEWIS.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
GLUG GLUG

EPILOGUE.
BLOODY HELL!
EVERY TIME I GET CLOSE TO FINDING SOME ANSWERS, IT ALL GETS SNATCHED AWAY!
IT'S AS IF...
AS IF SOMEONE WAS WATCHING MY EVERY MOVE...
CHUCKLE CHUCKLE
THE END... FOR NOW.

COVER GALLERY

MONTIEL

MONTIEL

variant cover by Joe Benitez & Peter Steigerwald

VARIANT COVER BY JOE BENITEZ & PETER STEIGERWALD

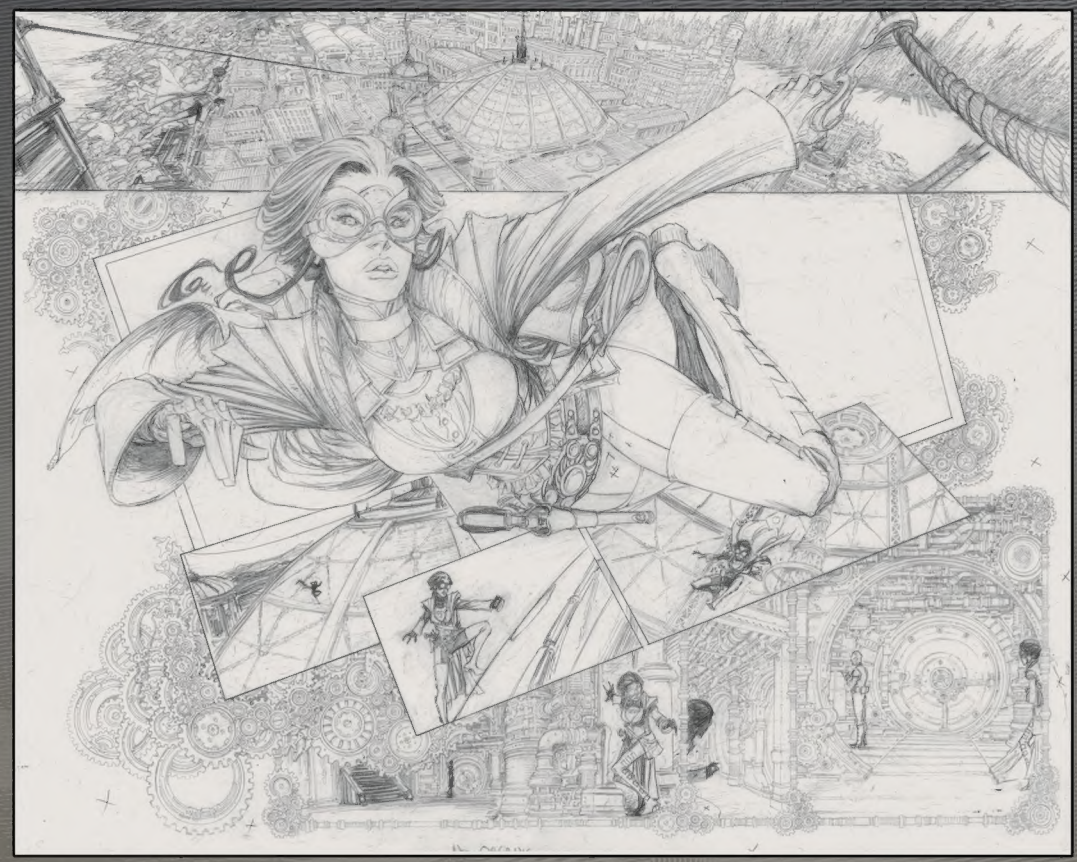
Day of the Dead variant by Joe Benitez & Peter Steigerwald

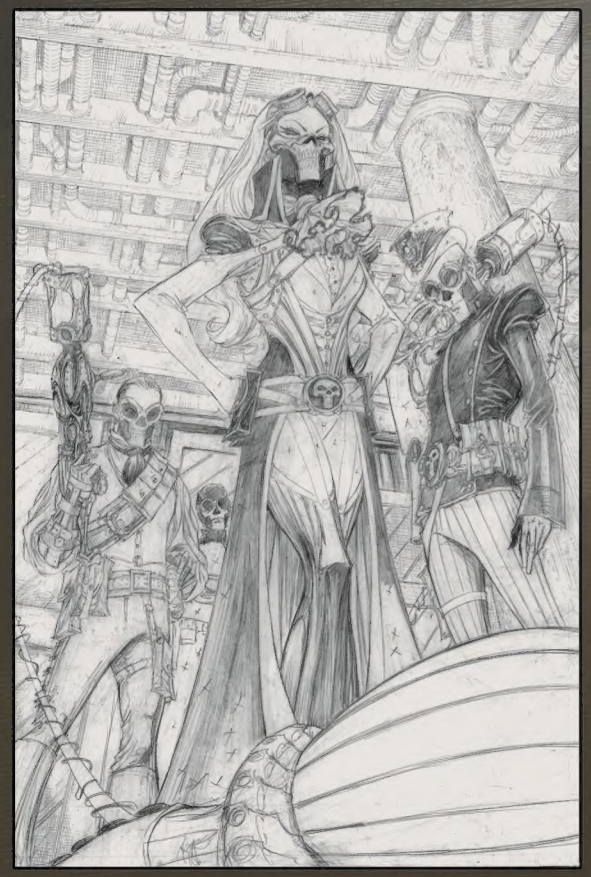
VARIANT COVER BY MIGUEL MERCADO

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

JOE BENITEZ is the creator, writer, and artist of *Lady Mechanika*. His previous work has included art duties on hit titles such as *Titans*, *JLA*, *Supergirl,* and *Superman/Batman* for DC Comics; *Weapon Zero, The Darkness,* and *Magdalena* for Image Comics; and *Soulfire* for Aspen Comics. In 2015, Joe finally fulfilled a lifelong dream and launched his own publishing company, Benitez Productions, where he continues to publish his creator-owned books including *Lady Mechanika*, the urban fantasy *Wraithborn*, and the post-apocalyptic graphic novel *Panda Girl*.

M. M. CHEN is Joe Benitez's longtime writing collaborator and editor-in-chief of his company, Benitez Productions, where she has the daunting task of trying to get his books out on time. M has a Masters Degree in engineering and trains in Krav Maga, both of which she enjoys incorporating into her writing. She is currently scripting *Lady Mechanika*, as well as developing a new high fantasy title and a *Día de los Muertos* series.



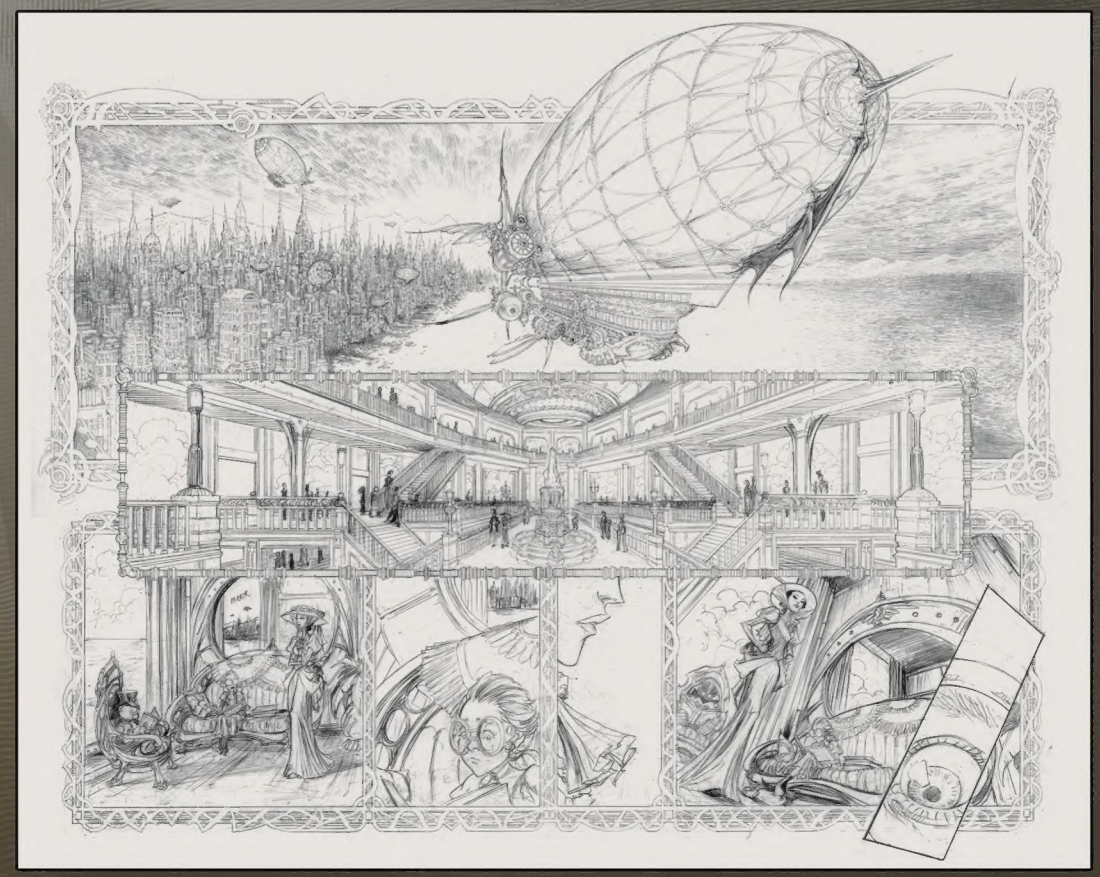


MICHAEL HEISLER has been lettering comics since 1987, starting at Marvel where he worked on such obscure titles as *Thor*, *Iron Man,* and *Uncanny X-Men*, and then joining obscure artists Jim Lee, Marc Silvestri, and Whilce Portacio at Homage Studios for the launch of a boutique imprint that came to be known as Image Comics. While at Homage he met future legend Joe Benitez, commencing a friendship that inevitably led to the book you are holding in your hands.

PETER STEIGERWALD was the original colorist on the first *Lady Mechanika* series. He is best known for his artistic collaborations with Michael Turner, and has also had a coloring hand in many high profile events and covers for DC and Marvel. Peter is currently working on *Fathom* and his creator-owned book that he writes, illustrates, and letters, *The ZooHunters*.

MARTIN MONTIEL is a Mexican comic book artist who hails from Tijuana, BC. His first foray into the American comic book industry was on another steampunk book, *The Victorian*, by Penny-Farthing Press in 2001, followed by several other indie books, including a creator-owned book, the epic sci-fi adventure *Zendra*. He met Joe through Image Comics, where he completed a year long run on Joe's former book, *The Darkness*. Martin is currently helping Joe on *Lady Mechanika*, where he is responsible for drawing all the intricate backgrounds including the profusion of gears.

BETH SOTELO began working in the comic book industry in 2001 as a colorist for Top Cow Productions and has since worked for Aspen Comics, DC, and Marvel. Her recent coloring credits include DC Comic's *Suicide Squad: Most Wanted*, Joe Benitez's *Lady Mechanika*, and coloring/illustration work for 20th Century Fox. Beth is also working on a second book to follow her original graphic novel *Grump,* which was successfully funded through Kickstarter.



Lady Mechanika Titles:

Lady Mechanika
(The Mystery of the Mechanical Corpse)

The Tablet of Destinies

The Lost Boys of West Abbey

La Dama de la Muerte

The Clockwork Assassin

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

Sangre

The Monster of the Ministry of Hell

The Devil in the Lake

The Mechanical Menagerie
(coming soon)

Lady Mechanika:
Steampunk Coloring Book I

Lady Mechanika:
Steampunk Coloring Book II

For more Lady Mechanika, visit:

***BenitezProductions.com** and*
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This volume collects the fifth story in the LADY MECHANIKA series, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci,* and also includes its prelude story, *Two* (first published in LADY MECHANIKA FCBD 2018).

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